



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Oregon Department of Transportation  
**From:** Travel Oregon  
**Subject:** Input on Oregon Governor's Transportation Vision Panel  
**Date:** March 30, 2016

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this issue. Transportation is a vital part of the travel and tourism industry and to our work at the Oregon Tourism Commission (dba Travel Oregon), where we strive to enhance visitors' experiences by providing information, resources and trip planning tools that inspire travel and consistently convey the exceptional quality of Oregon. The commission works to improve Oregonians' quality of life by strengthening economic impacts of the state's \$10.3 billion tourism industry that employs more than 101,000 Oregonians.

With that in mind, we believe three issues are of the utmost importance as we move forward with transportation improvement discussions: transportation options and alternatives within and surrounding Portland must be addressed; bicycle tourism is critical to economic growth throughout the state; and prioritizing pedestrian safety and streetscape improvements will draw more visitors and enhance local communities.

- 1. Providing transportation options and alternatives within Portland and a 75 mile radius from Portland would provide increased access, grow tourism and spur economic growth while reducing congestion.** Oregon, its cities and towns, have become world-class tourism destinations. Visitors flying into Portland International Airport, arriving by train or bus, as well as people living in Oregon, often prefer not to drive as part of their travel trips. In addition, communities around the greater Portland metro region are calling for transportation options and solutions to accommodate people without cars and reduce local congestion. These solutions could include public transportation, such as the existing MAX Red Line service from Portland International Airport, other public transit services such as the Mt. Hood Express, and private shuttles and transportation services. Travel Oregon believes that these services can be enhanced and expanded throughout the state, especially within 75 miles from Portland in order to accommodate tourism and travel trips. We also suggest looking more deeply into public-private partnerships for expanded transportation services for visitors, which might include incubating new shuttles and coaches. These services would help reduce congestion at hot spots, such as Multnomah Falls and Mt. Hood during weekend ski-season, and would help alleviate parking and other local transportation concerns.
- 2. Bicycle tourism is a critical tourism niche in Oregon, providing more than \$400 million in local spending, and bicycle routes should be prioritized.** Bicycle tourism is fueled by visitors and Oregonians who are seeking safe, comfortable and scenic bicycling routes. Routes range from premier trails such as the Historic Columbia River Highway and Oregon's Scenic Bikeways, to off-street dirt trails, and local transportation facilities as found in

communities across Oregon. Oregon has been, and continues to be seen as a national leader in providing bicycle routes in towns and across the state. Travel Oregon supports persisting in this leadership and placing a high priority on transportation projects that will connect or complete important regional projects (trails/routes) that are already underway (such as the Mt Hood Infinity Loop and the Gorge Town to Trails) and projects that will improve the safety for bicyclists on routes that are already drawing large volumes of bike travel such as 101 on the Oregon Coast. Therefore, significantly increasing bicycling facilities and multi-use paths across the state will both increase local transportation solutions and continue to drive the rapid growth and national leadership in our robust bicycle tourism economy.

3. **Improving main streets across Oregon, especially in Special Transportation Areas, by prioritizing pedestrian safety and streetscape improvements will attract visitors and benefit local economic development.** Seventy nine towns across the state like Independence, Sisters, McMinnville, Yachats, Jacksonville, John Day and La Grande have Special Transportation Areas that would benefit by focusing on streetscape and pedestrian safety improvements. We also strongly encourage developing cross-agency partnerships to create programs, such as is done in the City of Portland, to couple streetscape improvements with storefront improvement grants, tax credits and other redevelopment support. These types of programs can fuel investments in small-town economies and support the growth of local businesses and jobs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to weigh in and comment on this complex, yet important issue affecting us all.

Sincerely,



Scott West  
Chief Strategy Officer