

Oregon Environmental Council's Analysis of the Jobs & Transportation Act of 2009 (House Bill 2001)

OEC was ultimately unable to support the Jobs & Transportation Act. Despite the incorporation of several important “green” policies into the legislation, we believe the greenhouse gases generated by the massive road expansion funded by this bill will outweigh the greenhouse gases saved by these new policies.

We also feel the legislature missed an opportunity to maximize job creation and to lower transportation costs for households. A 2009 study by the Political Economy Research Institute found that transit projects create 30% more jobs than an equivalent investment in road and bridge projects. And families with access to increased transportation choices can save up to 50% in transportation costs compared to those with no access to transportation options according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey 2006.

Positive Results of the Transportation Package

- Our state department of transportation (ODOT) is required to develop a “least-cost planning” model, in consultation with local governments and metropolitan planning organizations, as a decision-making tool in the development of plans and projects at both the state and regional level.
- The Oregon Transportation Commission is required to review and update the selection criteria for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and to include such criteria as (1) Fosters livable communities by demonstrating that the investment reinforces or does not undermine compact urban development; (2) Enhances the value of transportation projects through designs and development that reflect environmental stewardship and community sensitivity; and (3) Is consistent with infrastructure plans and reinforces the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.
- ODOT is required to prepare an “efficient fee study” that must consider actual costs users impose on the highway system, including the cost of greenhouse gas emissions.
- The tax credit for pay-as-you-drive auto insurance has been extended.
- A congestion pricing pilot program in the Portland metro area must be undertaken within 36 months.
- ODOT is required to adopt rules to incorporate environmental performance standards into design and construction of all state highway construction projects, including local projects funded by the department.
- Medium-speed electric vehicles may operate on roads posted up to 45 mph, and the state is required to work with private firms to install electric motor vehicle recharging stations at roadside rest areas.

Mixed Results

- Lottery bonds of not more than \$100 million will be deposited in a Multimodal Transportation Fund. An Urban Trail Fund has been created, with a promised \$1 million in funding. In a separate action, the Oregon Transportation Commission

has committed \$24 million in federal funding to multimodal transportation. Through Senate Bill 34, TriMet (Portland area) and Lane Transit District (Eugene/Springfield area) are authorized to increase their local payroll tax by one-tenth of one percent once the economy recovers. However, this multimodal funding is not nearly as large as we were fighting for; the funding for bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure is woefully inadequate; and the state's smaller transit districts got no authorization to raise dollars locally.

- The Portland metropolitan planning organization (Metro) is required to develop and adopt a land use and transportation scenario that reduces greenhouse gases, and jurisdictions within Metro will be required to amend their transportation and land use plans in order to implement the scenario. The second largest metropolitan planning organization in the state (Eugene/Springfield) is required to develop a nonbinding scenario. While this is a start, our goal was to achieve this requirement for all six metropolitan planning organizations in the state. Thankfully, a separate bill, HB 2186, sets up a special Metropolitan Planning Organization Task Force, co-chaired by House Speaker David Hunt and Senate President Peter Courtney, to evaluate how to move the other MPOs forward, with probable legislation in 2010. This will ensure that the important work growing communities must do to reduce greenhouse gases through better transportation and land use planning is not delayed.

Negative Results

- The funds raised by the transportation package are very heavily skewed toward road building, rather than multimodal transportation solutions and repair and preservation of our existing transportation system, and the legislature chose to earmark a list of modernization projects, several of which will result in sprawl and greater greenhouse gas emissions. This earmarked list is essentially the roadmap for roadbuilding for the next 20 years even if we find through least cost planning, better project selection criteria and metropolitan area greenhouse gas planning that far more cost-effective, environmentally protective projects could have been built.

For more information:

Chris Hagerbaumer, Deputy Director
503-222-1963 x102
chrish@oeconline.org