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NEWS RELEASE

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September 9, 2015

2016 CANDIDATES NEED TO BE PREPARED TO PASS TRANSPORTATION PACKAGE IN 2017

(SALEM) – On the eve of the opening of the six-month filing period for state office, Senate President Peter Courtney has a message for those who want to serve the people of Oregon.

“If you want to be in the Legislature; if you want to be governor; if you want to be secretary of state or treasurer; you need to be committed to passing a major transportation plan before the 2017 Legislature adjourns,” said Courtney (D-Salem/Gervais/Woodburn) “It has to be our top priority. Our roads and bridges are becoming dangerous. Traffic is jammed up everywhere. Congestion is at an all-time high. We have to act. It’s going to take all of us to get it done.”

Thursday is the first day candidates for the Legislature and statewide offices can file to run in the 2016 election cycle. The filing period continues through March 8. Those elected in November 2016 will be the officials serving during the 2017 session.

“Right now, some people are thinking about running. Some are planning to run. Some will file their paperwork tomorrow morning. Every one of them needs to know what they are signing up for,” Courtney said. “Transportation funding will be the defining issue of the 2017 session.”

The Senate President said he would prefer the Legislature fund a package of transportation projects during the 2016 session, but has found little support from others for tackling the complex and politically charged issue in the short session.

The Oregon Department of Transportation reports that currently 82 bridges are classified as structurally deficient and the list grows every month. Current funding levels are inadequate to keep up with the need to repave deteriorating highways. Many of the 34,000 culverts which run under state highways haven’t been replaced in more than 40 years. The result is a transportation system that is crumbling.

“Our roads are rough and getting rougher. Culverts are failing and leaving giant holes in our highways. By the time we convene the 2017 session, there will be more than 100 bridges that put the traveling public at risk,” Courtney said. “Within 20 years, the list of bridges in need of repair will top 900. We can’t wait. The safety of Oregon and her people is at stake.”