

Oregon News

ODOT

Oregon transportation projects face delays, cost hikes

Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason

Much of the money and selling points of the \$5.3 billion Keep Oregon Moving transportation package passed during the 2017 Oregon Legislature was for specific projects.

Eight years later, cost estimates have soared, projects are delayed and more than \$50 million was spent on two projects that haven't been used.

Lawmakers directed ODOT to complete cost studies for the freeway project through the Rose Quarter in Portland and the Interstate 205 Abernethy Bridge. The two are estimated to cost a combined \$2.3 billion — on the low end.

ODOT doesn't meet accountability measures from House Bill 2017

Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason

The accountability piece was intended to ameliorate “concerns about whether the department was operating well and whether the money was being spent as intended,” said Beyer, who was co-chair of the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, which crafted HB 2017.

The Statesman Journal found ODOT failed to meet cost-benefit requirements in the legislation and shared inconsistent figures and out-of-date information with the public, among other shortcomings.

Oregon Department of Transportation faces revenue crisis

Statesman Journal | By Anastasia Mason

Oregon legislative leaders say they plan to prioritize a funding package during the current session that will provide enough money to keep the state's transportation system running and finish major projects. If they do, it would mirror the effort made eight years ago when lawmakers passed [House Bill 2017](#), a transportation package projected to generate \$5.3 billion over a decade through taxes, fees and bonds.

POLITICS

Oregon, Washington sue over Trump order targeting gender-affirming care

OPB | By Amelia Templeton

Oregon’s attorney general is [joining a lawsuit](#) against the Trump administration over an executive order that aims to block access to gender-affirming care for children and young adults.

The lawsuit alleges that hospitals and medical schools in Oregon, Washington and Minnesota stand to immediately lose more than \$1 billion in federal funding for research and treatment of conditions that are unrelated to gender-affirming care. That includes more than \$400 million at OHSU, grants that it uses to research critical subjects like cancer, vaccines and ADHD.

The lawsuit comes on the heels of another executive order aimed at transgender people. Earlier this week, Trump signed an executive order that aims to keep trans women out of women’s sports. Oregon House Minority Leader Christine Drazan, R-Canby, said she’d [soon introduce a bill](#) to align the state’s high school athletics with the order.

Meanwhile, **Senate Minority Leader Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles**, who attended the signing of that executive order Wednesday, has introduced a bill requiring Oregon school districts to ensure that “every athletic competition or extracurricular sport is expressly designated by the biological sex of the students who participate in the competition or sport.”

Oregon may add T-bone steak to official symbols, joining potato and marionberry pie

KATU | By Sana Aljobory

State Senator Todd Nash is among the sponsors of a resolution to designate the T-bone as Oregon's state steak.

Nash explained the choice, saying, "Originally, I wanted to make it a rib eye, but rib eye had already been taken by Oklahoma. And then when we looked into it and really thought about it, the T-bone made a lot of sense because it's actually two steaks."

"It kind of represents our state where you have the New York strip on one side, you had a filet mignon on the other. And you can really respect both or high-quality cuts of meat. And we can agree on one or the other. But if you combine it into a T-bone, it's something that can be shared by everybody and agreed on by everybody," he said.

Nash also emphasized the importance of cattle to Oregon's economy. "I think people need to recognize that we do have cattle in every county in Oregon. And it is one of the biggest economic drivers as far as agriculture goes. It's either in the number one or the number two top commodity in the state and has been for a long time. So cattle are a big deal in Oregon and we wanna bring recognition to that," he said. Highlighting the state's culinary symbols, Nash added, "We already have a state vegetable which is the potato. We have a state pie that's the marionberry pie. Now we have a steak. You put the three of those together that's almost the perfect meal right there."

[Oregon 'most frightening place to die,' with nation's most expansive estate tax, Republicans say. They hope to change that.](#)

The Oregonian | By Aimee Green

As far as dying goes, Oregon is a terrible place to do it for those who want to pass down a home, business or life's savings to loved ones tax-free.

So say a cadre of 10 Republicans who are sponsoring a controversial bill to dramatically restructure [the estate tax](#) so it exempts an ever-growing pool of Oregonians whom the bill's backers don't consider uber wealthy but who are subject to it.

[How Oregon plans to handle 'staggering' demand for new transmission lines](#)

The Oregonian | By Gosia Wosniacka

So state lawmakers are working on several bills that would ease the planning, siting, permitting and building of transmission lines – but also require alternatives.

The Bonneville Power Administration, a federal agency that markets hydropower from 31 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin, owns and operates 75% of the Northwest's high-voltage lines.

The problem: BPA's transmission lines are now nearly full.

Gamba's key proposal to speed up building and upgrading transmission lines would establish the Oregon Electric Transmission Authority as an independent public corporation.

[Lawmakers Ponder Benefits and Risks of Financial Tool for Cash-Strapped Workers](#)

Willamette Week | By Nigel Jaquiss

There's plenty of [evidence](#) that many Oregonians live paycheck to paycheck—45% of households do, according to a 2024 survey.

And more than 145,000 Oregon workers, according to industry sources, have taken advantage of a relatively new—and currently, in Oregon, unregulated—tool called “earned wage access,” or in the parlance of the financial technology companies that offer them, EWA.

The EWA provider—there are many—then charges a fee for that service (and in some cases, asks the worker for tips as an additional form of compensation).

Providers have proposed legislation that would require them to be licensed by the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services and limit fees to no more than \$7 per transaction.

[Editorial: Portland's fledgling government passes a test](#)

The Oregonian Editorial Board

Despite intense pressure, city of Portland staffers did their job last Monday when they [affirmed that Zenith Energy's](#) fuel terminal business is compatible with the city's land-use regulations

The questions for Zenith – and the new city government – aren't over, however. Zenith still needs to secure a new air-quality permit from the state – the application that necessitated the city's review of its land-use compatibility in the first place.

[Sen. Golden proposes changing state wildfire map to curb anger and rumors](#)

Oregon Capital Chronicle | By Alex Baumhardt

Nearly four years ago, in the aftermath of the state's most destructive wildfires in history, the Oregon Legislature passed a bipartisan package of wildfire prevention initiatives, including one that required state experts to create a map showing high wildfire risk areas statewide.

The point of the Wildfire Risk Map, [first published](#) in 2022, was to inform lawmakers and agencies like the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office about where to best deploy limited resources to prevent fires. But the map provoked [backlash](#) from homeowners in some high-risk areas who were worried about wildfire insurance rates and coverage, and potentially having to comply with new building requirements.

State foresters and university experts redid the map, renamed it the Wildfire Hazard Map, changed some designations and put it online, [searchable](#) by address. But many homeowners are still unhappy about what the designations mean or feel the wildfire mitigation work they've already done hasn't been factored in.

Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Ashland, who supported creating the map, said it's become counterproductive in its current form.

Two other bills proposed in the current session by Republicans would get rid of the map all together or get rid of Senate Bill 762, which also required the electric utilities to create wildfire protection plans, required state agencies to develop new defensible space and building code requirements to protect homes and communities and created programs to mitigate the impacts of wildfire smoke on public health.

[Here are 7 bills we are watching in the Oregon Legislature in 2025](#)

Axios | By Meira Gebel

Oregon lawmakers are three weeks into this year's legislative session and have already introduced hundreds of bills on topics including transportation, housing, food insecurity and the environment.

[Rising costs in organic dairy production leaves shelves empty, Oregon farmers adapting](#)

Fox News | By Adrian Thomas

A nationwide shortage of organic dairy products has led to empty shelves and higher prices at grocery stores, as farmers grapple with rising costs to keep their operations afloat.

Organic dairy farmer Robert Kircher, who runs Forest Glen Oaks Farm in Yamhill County with his brother, said the demand for organic milk is growing, but the cost of production is becoming a rapidly rising business expense. He says that the production challenges are a recent development.

While organic dairy farmers have received some federal assistance, including more than \$30 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2024, Kircher said those funds offer only temporary relief. The costs of organic feed, changing regulations, and inflationary pressures are making it difficult for family farms to survive.

TRUMP

[Trump says he has directed US Treasury to stop minting new pennies, citing rising cost](#)

Associated Press | By Jill Colvin

President Donald Trump says he has directed the Treasury Department to stop minting new pennies, citing the rising cost of producing the one-cent coin.

The U.S. Mint reported losing \$85.3 million in the 2024 fiscal year that ended in September on the nearly 3.2 billion pennies it produced. Every penny cost nearly \$0.037 — up from \$0.031 the year before.

[Trump's Cuts to NIH Funding Would Be "Devastating" to OHSU, Interim President Tells Staff](#)

Willamette Week | By Anthony Effinger

The Trump administration's plans to cut funding from the National Institutes of Health to research universities would be "devastating" to Oregon Health & Science University, interim president Steve Stadum wrote in an email to staff on Saturday.

The NIH issued ["supplemental guidance"](#) to its grants policy late on Friday, saying that it planned to slash the amount of money awarded for "indirect costs" like office space and maintenance to 15% of every grant. Institutions negotiate that percentage, and OHSU's rate has been 56%.

OHSU got \$277 million from the NIH last year, Stadum said. At the 56% matching rate, about \$177 million of that figure went to direct costs, and about \$100 million came in for indirect ones. At 15%, grants for indirect costs would bring in just \$27 million, a loss of about \$73 million.

EDUCATION

[Oregon's near-worst-in-nation education outcomes prompt a reckoning on school spending](#)

Oregon Live | By Julia Silverman

Instead, the focus from many of those advocates is to gear up for a huge push to convince lawmakers to pump more money into Oregon schools, beyond the [\\$11.3 billion proposed by Kotek](#) for the next two years. Their aim is to stave off looming [cuts](#) as districts prepare to shed counselors, educational assistants and librarians to reflect [decreased student enrollment](#) and [rising labor costs](#).

In the past eight years, their efforts paid off: Oregon super-sized spending on education, including from the landmark \$1 billion a year corporate tax designed to fuel student success and via more than a billion dollars in pandemic relief funds. Yet it has seen test scores drop steadily since 2017, exacerbated by the pandemic's toll, eventually landing in the nation's basement.

Those results have fueled a simmering counternarrative that the fundamental problem isn't a lack of money: It's how Oregon schools spend it, amid a vacuum of direction and lack of insistence on best practices from the state Department of Education and the governor's office.

"Something has to change in Oregon schools," Marguerite Roza, the director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University [told](#) the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education last month. "More money did not produce any kind of bumper increase in student outcomes."

States that are successful, Roza told The Oregonian/OregonLive in a follow-up interview, have a laser focus on clear academic goals, are [upfront](#) about disappointing results, [require](#) data-informed course corrections and are willing to [pay stellar teachers more](#) to work in high-needs schools.

Oregon checks none of those boxes.

Instead, the state allows each of its 197 school districts to decide how best to spend the bulk of their state funds, save for carve-outs on [early literacy](#) and career-technical education. State regulators collect basic metrics — a time-consuming, sometimes duplicative chore for districts — but provide minimal oversight and guidance.

[Oregon Coast district discusses book challenged by high school parents](#)

Tribune News

Members of the Seaside School District's Advisory Committee convened Wednesday to discuss Sherman Alexie's "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," which has been challenged by two parents who believed the book was inappropriate for the freshman English class where it was being taught.

HEALTH CARE

[Providence St. Vincent hospitalists honor picket line as part of new agreement](#)

KOIN | By Andrew Foran

Hospitalists with Providence St. Vincent are [honoring the picket line](#) to support nurses even after voting to ratify a new contract.

In a release on Saturday, union officials announced the vote and shared that hospitalists will continue to honor the picket line until the nurses also reach an agreement.

On Friday, nurses [voted overwhelmingly to reject](#) the most recent offer saying that the offer didn't go far enough to address safe staffing, competitive pay or affordable health care plans.

Providence faces a fifth week of strikes as St. Vincent doctors secure union deal

OPB

Hospital doctors within Providence St. Vincent Medical Center were among the few striking workers who approved a contract deal over the weekend as one of the largest medical strikes in Oregon history continued.

That strike appeared to be moving toward a resolution Tuesday as the Oregon Nurses Association announced tentative agreements had been reached for a majority of the bargaining units. By Friday, nurses at seven Providence facilities [voted to reject the deals](#).

The deal included pay increases, a bonus to make up for some of the lost work during the strike, a one-hour pay penalty for nurses if they work through a break or lunch period, and the establishment of a workgroup to look at health insurance provided to the nurses at Providence's hospitals, according to the nurses' union. It also enshrined language from a state law [mandating nurse-to-patient ratios](#) into worker contracts.

Monday will mark 32 days since the strike began.