

What we did in – 2020 ODOT transportation highlights

Wow, 2020 was an unpredictable year with multiple challenges for everyone, some that continue to impact us today. Despite the COVID 19 pandemic, spring floods, fall wildfires and other issues we completed about three dozen transportation projects over the past 12 months. These include several key winter safety related programs, downtown enhancements, ADA sidewalk curb ramp upgrades, highway erosion fixes, and a handful of pavement upgrades. So, come with me on a journey through time and space as we look back at the improvements your tax dollars supported in several eastern Oregon communities and along our scenic highways. all geared towards improving conditions and keeping you safe.

Three major winter safety project completed

You've likely read or heard about our big three projects we've been working on for the past two years. These are the OR 82 Minam Curve; the I-84 Snow Zone Safety Improvement; and the I-84 Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement projects. These efforts corrected a dangerous curve, installed real-time road condition message systems, and eliminated a major wintertime bottleneck for freight. Check out our short video featuring these three projects at <https://youtu.be/WyC9AzILzso>.

On OR 82 we cut back the hillside to turn a treacherous 25 mph hair-pin corner next to a steep ravine into a much safer 45 mph curve. Additional work included bank stabi-



As part of the Ladd Canyon Freight Improvement project, a new third lane for east-bound trucks heading up Ladd Canyon grade east of La Grande was open for traffic in early November.

lization along the Minam River a few miles east of the curve.

On Interstate 84 between Pendleton and La Grande we added about a dozen new digital reader boards, lighting, cameras, road and weather sensors, and other enhancements as part of our Snow Zone Safety Improvement Project. The new signs are providing real-time information about road conditions, hazards and recommended speeds to travelers headed over the Blue Mountains. The new roads and weather sensors feed data directly to the variable message signs, so it's instant information you can use while traveling. Extra cameras throughout the corridor and new lighting on Cabbage Hill will help you see road conditions on TripCheck.com before getting in your car, and also help you see better in fog and at night while on the freeway.

The main improvement you'll see from our I-84 Ladd Canyon Freight and Culvert Improvement Project is a new third lane for trucks headed eastbound up the steep Ladd Canyon grade, 7 miles east of La Grande. Wintertime closures caused by disabled trucks blocking all the lanes will be greatly reduced, now that there is more space for everyone. A bridge at the bottom of the hill was replaced with a truck-sized culvert that reduces icy conditions, another contributing factor to crashes and closures. Stream enhancement work for Brush Creek and Ladd Creek adjacent to the freeway was added to provide room for the extra lane and to restore access to fish habitats that had been blocked for decades.

Pavement preservation, operations and road repairs

Throughout the region over the past several months our contractors and maintenance crews resurfaced over 20 lane miles with new asphalt along sections of I-84 near Stanfield, OR 204 west of Elgin, U.S. 730 in Umatilla, and on city streets in Ontario. Protective chip seals were also applied to about 150 lane miles along sections of U.S. 95, OR 7, OR 410, U.S. 26 and U.S. 395 in Malheur, Baker and Grant counties.

Sections of I-84 and OR 204 were damaged in flooding events last spring, resulting in road closures and lengthy detours. ODOT crews and contractors worked long hours to repair the damaged areas.

A short section of U.S. 26 near milepost 114 through the Picture Gorge area west of Dayville and part of U.S. 395 near milepost 124.5 north of Mt. Vernon both received erosion repairs in 2020.

Another small, but important project completed in time for winter was adding a lighted turnaround area along U.S. 30 near milepost 0.6 between La Grande and the I-84 Exit 259 westbound on-ramp. During freeway closures motorists often get stranded along U.S. 30 when they don't know the freeway on-ramp is closed. The new turnaround near Gangloff Park provides a safe place for cars and large trucks to reverse direction and head back to town.

Bridges and culverts

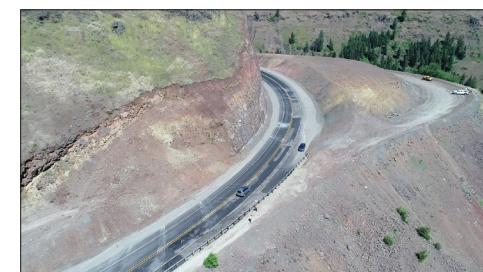
The OR 37 Cold Springs RR crossing bridge at mile post one, located about a mile east of U.S. 730 near the Columbia River, received critical repairs to the bridge deck, railing and support structure. A five-week long highway closure this fall was required to accommodate the work. The repaired

bridge is now ready to provide several more decades of service.

On OR 244 we replaced an undersized and failing culvert near milepost 45, 16 miles west of La Grande, that connected Whiskey Creek to the Grande Ronde River. Past flooding events due to the culvert's poor condition and size prompted the replacement. The new 22-foot-wide concrete box culvert will easily handle spring snow melt and improve fish passage for Whiskey Creek.

Pedestrian and downtown enhancements:

Thousands of sidewalk curb ramps are being upgraded throughout Oregon to ensure they meet current ADA standards. The multi-year program in eastern Oregon kicked off in 2020 with curb ramp upgrades in Enterprise, Union, Pendleton, Milton-Freewater and Umatilla. More work in these and several other communities will continue in 2021 and beyond.



The realigned Minam Curve along OR 82 creates a safer drive for all motorists, especially in wintertime.

In addition to ADA curb ramp upgrades, a section of U.S. 730 and some city streets in Umatilla received pavement, storm drain and sidewalk upgrades between the Umatilla River Bridge and Yerxa Avenue. These downtown enhancements have been on the city's needs list for years and are welcome improvements for the community.

While we completed a number of important projects this past year, the work is never ending. Expect a new batch of projects gearing up in the spring. Watch for our Summer Construction Map on the Web at oregon.gov/odot in May. Don't forget to visit TripCheck.com throughout the year for current road and weather impacts along Oregon highways.

If you would like to hear more about these or other transportation projects, please call our Region 5 Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg at 541-963-1330, email thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us.



Crews installed one of the new message reader boards along the freeway as part of the two-year I-84: Snow Zone Safety Improvements Project. The project included about a dozen such signs between Pendleton and La Grande, along with new cameras, road sensors, lighting and other enhancements.