

# Opinion / Politics

— EDITORIAL —

## Transportation Bill worth it?

Ever since the Transportation Bill, co-authored in part by Reps. Greg Smith and Cliff Bentz, passed, we've heard nothing from other politicians left of the aisle but glowing endorsements. Not so much praise from the most conservative faction in our legislature, however.

We get the allure. In Ontario, for example, a \$26 million rail project is now in

the works—a huge economic deal for that area. For Baker County, some funds will be added to our wonderful yet financially needful County Roads Department.

But was this pork-filled bill the way to go about it though? With its passage comes yet another withholding tax from employee paychecks—it also imposes new fees on bicycle riders, a new tax on car sales and an increased gas tax ... And let's face it—most of the revenue is going to be spent far away from Eastern Oregon.

Couldn't we have passed a temporary levy to add funding to our Road Department, in a locally managed budget?

We're posting the full project list lined out for the Transportation Bill's spending. Make up your own minds.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

Statewide Balancing	
Highway Project Name	Estimated Cost
<b>Region 1</b>	
Hwy 211 Improvements from Hwy 213 to Molalla Avenue in City of Molalla	\$750,000
Wanapa Street Improvements in City of Cascade Locks	\$750,000
Port of Hood River Bridge Replacement EIS	\$5,000,000
Columbia Blvd Pedestrian Safety Improvements	\$1,500,000
Powell Blvd Jurisdiction Transfer	\$110,000,000
I-205 Active Traffic Management	\$15,200,000
I-205 Corridor Bottleneck	\$15,500,000
OR-217 Northbound	\$54,000,000
OR-217 Southbound	\$44,000,000
Improvements to Graham Road at the Intersection with I-84 in City of Troutdale	\$3,000,000
<b>Region 1 Total</b>	<b>\$249,700,000</b>
<b>Region 2</b>	
Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center Access Roads in Columbia County	\$4,000,000
I-5 at Aurora-Donald Interchange, Phase 1	\$25,000,000
OR 99E in City of Halsey	\$13,000,000
State Hwy 214 Pedestrian Safety Improvements @ Jefferson Street in City of Silverton	\$750,000
Territorial Highway Jurisdictional Transfer	\$30,000,000
US 20 Safety Upgrades: Albany to Corvallis	\$20,000,000
State Hwy 58, Passing Lanes West of Oakridge	\$7,200,000
State Hwy 22, Center Street Bridge Seismic Retrofit in City of Salem	\$60,000,000
State Hwy 99 Improvements in Eugene - Jurisdictional Transfer	\$5,000,000
State Hwy 126 Florence-Eugene Highway EIS Study	\$3,000,000
42nd Street in City of Springfield	\$12,000,000
Newberg-Dundee Bypass, Phase 2 (Design Only)	\$22,000,000
Sunset Rest Area on US 26	
The Maples Rest Area on OR 22	
Van Duzer Corridor State Park on OR 22	
Ellmaker Wayside State Park on US 20	
<b>Region 2 Total</b>	<b>\$201,950,000</b>
<b>Region 3</b>	
Scottsburg Bridge Replacement	\$40,000,000
Southern Oregon Seismic Triage	\$35,000,000
Suncrest Rest Area on I-5	
<b>Region 3 Total</b>	<b>\$75,000,000</b>
<b>Region 4</b>	
US 97 / Cooley Rd Mid-term Improvements	\$50,000,000
US 97 at Terrebonne	\$20,000,000
Improvements to Alder Creek Road in Wheeler County (Local)	\$593,000
Pedestrian Safety Improvements in City of Dufur	\$400,000
Pedestrian Safety and Road Improvements in City of Prineville	\$3,000,000
Tom McCall Road Roundabout	\$1,000,000
Pedestrian Safety Improvements in City of Arlington	\$1,500,000
Beaver Marsh Rest Area on US 97	
Cow Canyon Rest Area on US 97	

Statewide Balancing	
Midland Rest Area on US 97	
Peter Skene Ogden State Park on US 97	
<b>Region 4 Total</b>	<b>\$76,493,000</b>
<b>Region 5</b>	
Port of Umatilla Road (Local)	\$2,000,000
US 20 Freight Mobility Enhancements	\$10,000,000
Hermiston North First Place Project (Local)	\$4,500,000
Hwy 30 / Hughes Lane Intersection (Local)	\$5,800,000
Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center Access Road Project (Local)	\$1,097,000
Pedestrian Safety and Road Improvements in City of Milton-Freewater (Local)	\$3,000,000
Columbia Development Authority - Umatilla Army Depot Access (Local)	\$7,000,000
Cedar St. / Hughes Lane Intersection Enhancements in Baker County	\$1,250,000
Pedestrian Safety and Road Improvements in City of Burns	\$3,000,000
Pedestrian Safety and Road Improvements in City of Irrigon (Local)	\$3,000,000
Pedestrian Safety and Road Improvements in City of Heppner (Local)	\$3,000,000
Deadman Pass Rest Area on I-84	
<b>Region 5 Total</b>	<b>\$43,647,000</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	
Rest Areas Capital Improvement	\$19,416,000
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>\$19,416,000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$666,206,000</b>

  

Multimodal Projects	
Project Name	Estimated Cost
<b>Region 2</b>	
Mid-Willamette Valley Transmodal Facility	\$25,000,000
Extend Brooks Rail Siding to Reduce Train Traffic Conflicts	\$2,600,000
<b>Region 2 Total</b>	<b>\$27,600,000</b>
<b>Region 5</b>	
Port of Morrow - Rail Expansion in East Beach Industrial Park & other (Local Non-Hwy)	\$6,550,000
Ontario / Nyssa Transmodal Facility (Local Non-Hwy)	\$26,000,000
<b>Region 5 Total</b>	<b>\$32,550,000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$60,150,000</b>

## ODOT fuels tax audit report released

An audit released by the Oregon Secretary of State found that the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) new fuels tax system accurately assesses and collects fuels taxes for Oregon and other local jurisdictions.

In 2013, ODOT contracted with Avalara to implement a new fuels tax system for \$2.8 million. The previous system was outdated and relied heavily on paper returns and manual inputs by department staff. The new Oregon Fuels Tax System (OFTS) allows for fuels tax licensees to electronically submit returns and pay fuels tax owed to the state and other

local jurisdictions through an online web portal. During 2016, OFTS processed approximately 14,000 fuels tax returns and collected over \$565 million in fuels taxes.

Auditors examined fuels tax returns submitted during 2016 and determined the system's calculations to be correct for 99.5% of all returns. The remaining 0.5% of records differed due to rounding errors or manual overrides of calculations by department staff.

However, ODOT needs to address several weaknesses identified in the audit report. Specifically, the report identified design flaws that may allow for certain

fuels tax refunds to be issued for more than what was owed, and has caused inaccuracies in some key reports. The audit report also identifies security weaknesses which, if left unmitigated, may put the system and its data at risk.

The report includes nine recommendations to ODOT management to address weaknesses identified during the audit, including fixing system design flaws and correcting security weaknesses.

View this audit and all recently released audits: <http://sos.oregon.gov/audits/Pages/recent.aspx>

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— GUEST OPINION —

## Please help us repeal bad legislation

By Suzan Ellis Jones  
Special to The Baker County Press

Do you want to help repeal some of the crazy stuff the legislature did in this last session?

There are five petitions, which could put a variety of issues on the ballot in November of 2018.

Petition ID number 302 is the last in the great petition race, which is virtually over for all petitions September 30th.

#302 is the referendum to repeal Senate Bill 719, the gun confiscation law that Governor Brown just signed a couple of weeks ago. She deliberately dawdled in signing so the time would run out of time to do a petition to get this issue on the ballot. We need to collect at least 60,000 valid signatures in just a few short weeks. (58,789).

Petition ID number 301, another referendum will repeal Governor Brown's healthcare sales and service tax. If not removed it will also become a payroll tax. This will require at least 60,000 valid signatures to make the ballot.

Petition ID number 1, which is an Oregon Constitutional based petition drive will prohibit spending public funds either directly or indirectly for abortions in Oregon.

This petition will require over 117,578 valid signatures to qualify for the ballot in November of 2018.

Petition ID number 5, if passed will require ALL voters to provide proof of



Submitted Photo

Suzan Ellis Jones is Chair of the Baker County Republicans, shown here with Jesse Watters from Fox. She is also Alt. Chair, Congressional District 2 Republicans and Chair, ORP State Natural Resource Committee.

citizenship before the can vote.

This petition as a state initiative will require 88,000 valid signatures to get on the ballot.

Petition ID number 22, another state initiative will overturn Oregon's Sanctuary status.

This will require over 88,000 valid signatures to make the November ballot.

The Baker County Republican party is actively circulating petitions all over the county.

Any registered voter of any party in Oregon can sign these petitions. If you want to help circulate, please call me at 541-519-5035 and we will get you petitions.

We will have a petition drive this Saturday, September 9th at the corner of Campbell and Grove starting at 1:00 p.m., and on Saturday, September 16 at the same times. We will have all five petitions ready to be signed.

## 'Kid Governor' launches

In conjunction with the first day of school, Secretary of State Dennis Richardson announced the start of a new civics program that focuses on Oregon's 5th graders.

Kid Governor is a statewide, in-school civics program designed by the Connecticut Public Affairs Network. The Network has been working with the office of Oregon's Secretary of State to adapt the program for Oregon elementary schools. This program is slated to become a nation-wide program in the coming years. Oregon will be the second state to undertake the initiative.

"It gives me great pleasure to announce the Kid Governor program," said Secretary of State Dennis Richardson. "This initiative will help promote in our elementary school chil-

dren an interest in how our government functions and will help develop our future leaders. Every public, private, charter, tribal, and online school is eligible to participate. Homeschoolers are also eligible."

Each nominated student will work with his or her school to make a short, online video speech announcing their candidacy. In the videos, each student will address an important issue he or she would like to work on throughout the next calendar year. A group of experts will choose seven finalists whose videos will be placed on the Secretary of State website. From November 6-14, Oregon 5th graders can vote for which of the seven candidates they want to elect as Oregon's Kid Governor. The winner will be announced before

Thanksgiving, and an official inauguration ceremony will be held January 9, 2018 at the State Capitol in Salem.

"During the Kid Governor's term in office, he or she will meet with Oregon's governor and our legislators and will work with my office on their special issue of interest," said Richardson. "We will mentor and help our Kid Governor learn about and prepare to hold a press conference. The Kid Governor will also give an online civics speech to other Oregon 5th graders. I hope everyone is as excited about the program as we are here in Salem."

The details about how the Kid Governor program works can be found online: <http://or.kidgovernor.org>.

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Published weekly every Friday.  
Subscription rates per year are \$29.95 all areas, e-mail delivery. \$39.95 print issue, home delivery, Baker City city limits only. \$49.95 print issue, mail delivery, outside Baker City city limits only.  
Payment in advance.

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