

# ODOT review could lead to hiring more consultants

## Next steps after \$1 million audit

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A \$1 million management performance audit of the state Department of Transportation may yield no specific recommendations for how to improve accountability or reduce waste at the agency.

Instead, the Department of Administrative Services plans to recommend that the state spend more money and hire more independent contractors to address issues such as conflicts of interest in contracting and projects overdue and over budget.

The work product from those contractor studies could take up to a year, Department of Administrative Services Director Katy Coba told lawmakers on committee subgroup examining accountability measures Wednesday.

The state paid New York-based McKinsey & Co. \$1 million to evaluate the performance of the agency before lawmakers consider approving hundreds of millions of dollars in new transportation funding later this session. The new revenue would likely come largely from a hike in the state's gas tax and registration fees.

Gov. Kate Brown ordered the review to help allay lawmakers' concerns the agency

wasn't prepared to handle the new projects efficiently and effectively.

"You can understand why a couple of us are incredulous," said state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose.

When hiring additional consultants to reform ODOT, "how do we not waste a boatload of money?" Johnson asked.

Coba suggested that lawmakers could still move forward with the package, noting that the management review was generally favorable of ODOT.

"The McKinsey report, as I would interpret it, basically says ODOT is a solid operation," Coba said. "They are in the top quartile for West-

ern departments of transportation. This is a not a broken organization."

McKinsey released a report of findings about the agency in February. The consultants concluded there is an unclear governance structure for ODOT and the Oregon Transportation Commission, which sets policy for the agency. The agency also lacks a strategic vision for the future and accountability measures, the consultants found.

Accountability measures could be proposed in-house or by legislators on the legislative Committee on Transporta-

tion Preservation and Modernization, which is responsible for crafting a transportation package.

For instance, lawmakers could restore the authority to hire and fire the ODOT director to the Oregon Transportation Commission, as some former commission chairmen have suggested. That authority now lies with the governor.

Despite McKinsey's favorable report of the agency, some lawmakers will remain distrustful of the agency, said Rep. John Lively, D-Springfield.

Sen. Fred Girod, R-Stay-

ton, said he was "less than impressed with the quality of what" McKinsey released.

The Department of Administrative Services initially had planned to produce recommendations from McKinsey's findings by March 1. That due date was pushed back to April 15, after the co-chair and vice-chairs of the transportation package committee asked the department to "slow down," Coba said.

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## A NOTE TO OUR READERS

The Daily Astorian

1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

The Daily Astorian will be undertaking routine maintenance at the newspaper's building Friday afternoon, which will require that power be off between

While the newspaper will remain open for business during those hours, the computer system will be offline and the telephone system will have limited capacity. As a result, some

customers who may try to contact the newspaper may not be able to complete the call. The newspaper's management apologizes for any inconvenience the outage may cause during those hours.

## Dead pedestrian identified

The Daily Astorian

Richard Franklin Pollock, 44, of Ketchikan, Alaska, has been identified as the pedestrian who died after being struck by a car on U.S. Highway 26 last week.

Pollock was standing in the

road just east of Seaside on the morning of March 14 when he was struck by a 2011 Subaru Legacy traveling east. The highway was closed for roughly four hours after the crash.

Oregon State Police have yet to reveal why Pollock was standing in the roadway.

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