

\$8B transportation package would strip governor's ability to appoint ODOT head

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Legislators on a joint committee to craft a transportation package plan to propose shifting authority to appoint the director of the Oregon Department of Transportation from the governor to the Oregon Transportation Commission.

"If you are going to have entity with fiduciary responsibility, they need the ability to appoint the CEO," said Committee Co-Chairman Lee Beyer, D-Eugene.

Under the proposal, the five-member commission would appoint the director "in consultation with the governor."

The proposal is one part of a transportation package that would raise about \$8 billion over the next 10 years to pay for projects to relieve congestion and

maintain roads and bridges.

The 14-member committee met over the last two weeks to refine points they wanted to include in the legislation, which legislative counsel is in the process of drafting. Lawmakers emphasized that their agreement for the first draft of the legislation did not necessarily indicate their support for all of the provisions. Many of the finer points will be hashed out after the first draft is completed.

Co-chairwoman Rep. Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay, estimated the first draft would be finished by May 31, with public hearings scheduled afterwards.

The money for the plan would come from a combination of hikes in the gas tax and registration and license fees, tolls and new taxes on payroll and purchases of new vehicles and bicycles. The legislation also would require a

website where taxpayers could follow the progress and budgets of projects in their area and create an independent staff for the OTC, which sets policy for ODOT.

Tammy Baney, OTC chairwoman, earlier this year asked Gov. Kate Brown for a separate staff and for more involvement in the appointment of the ODOT director.

The plan identifies a few specific projects to ease congestion, but other projects would be prioritized by the Oregon Transportation Commission. Specific projects would:

- Add lanes on Interstate 5 near Portland's Rose Quarter from Interstate 84 to Interstate 405.
- Add northbound and southbound lanes on Highway 217 through the Portland metro area.
- Widen Interstate 205 to six lanes from Oregon City to Stafford Road.
- Widen and seismically reinforce Interstate 205's Abernethy Bridge.

The plan raises an average of

about \$800 million per year in additional transportation funding.

The money would come from increases in the gas tax and vehicle fees and a set of new taxes over the next 10 years, including:

- Gas tax increase from 30 cents to 44 cents.
- Tiered increase in title and registration fees, with higher increases for fuel-efficient vehicles, which pay less in gas taxes.
- Statewide payroll tax of one-tenth of 1 percent to pay for mass transit.
- Tolls to be determined.
- Bicycle excise tax of 5 percent.
- Dealer privilege tax of 1 percent on new vehicle purchases.

The state spends about \$1.3 billion a year on transportation system maintenance and upgrades. This proposal would bring that amount up to about \$2.1 billion.

The committee's co-chairs have estimated a vote on the package could happen as early as mid-June.

House approves tighter tracking for medical marijuana

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon House of Representatives Monday passed a bill 51-to-7 that requires medical marijuana to undergo the same tight-looped tracking as the recreational product.

"The core purpose of this bill is to make sure that we eliminate the illegal market by enhancing tracking and other associated things that will prevent diversion from Oregon's legal marijuana sector to the illegal market," said Rep. Ann Lininger, D-Lake Oswego, co-chairwoman of the Joint Committee on Marijuana Regulation.

The effort to pass the reforms took on more urgency after the Trump administration indicated it could crack down on marijuana commerce in states where the drug has been legalized, committee members have indicated.

The requirement is the most significant of several tweaks the bill makes to Oregon's marijuana regulations.

The Senate passed the bill 23-to-6 on May 10.

Under existing law, medical producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers have to self-report to the Oregon Health Authority how much marijuana they have. The bill requires all of that product to be tracked with a bar code or computer chip that follows the plant from a seedling to its final product.

The bill exempts medical marijuana cardholders and home growers from the tracking requirements.

The legislation also requires:

- OHA to create an electronic database to track medical marijuana cardholder activity and to share that information with the Department of Revenue and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.
- Adding two commissioners to the OLCC from Eastern Oregon and Western Oregon.
- Financial disclosures to the OLCC by people with a financial interest in a marijuana business applying for a license.
- OLCC to pursue disciplinary action against a former licensee even if the license has been revoked or suspended. (OLCC previously did not have that enforcement authority over former licensees.)

Dems: Medicaid concerns haven't derailed provider tax talks

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Two key Democratic legislators maintain that concerns raised last week by the secretary of state about the state's Medicaid population have not affected negotiations over a possible tax on health care providers.

The so-called provider tax aims to raise between \$575 million and \$600 million to cover part of the state's costs of expanding the pool of people who qualify for Medicaid, the federal government's health care coverage for the poor and other needy groups.

It allows the state to receive matching federal funds. A private work group of legislators and others involved in health care is hashing out the details.

Last week, Oregon Secretary of State Dennis Richardson released a memo saying that the state, more than three years after expanding Medicaid under the federal Affordable Care Act, has not verified everyone covered by the Oregon Health Plan still met the criteria.

It's unclear whether about 115,000 of the 1 million Oregonians on Medicaid are still eligible, Richardson's memo said.

Of that group, about 14,000 people are in the process of being removed from the plan for not responding to the state's inquiry; 17,000 people are undergoing analysis; and by the end of the month, the Oregon Health Authority says it will know whether the remaining 84,000 people require further analysis.

The state received a series of passes on performing annual eligibility determinations until mid-2016.

The Oregon Health Authority blames old data systems and the failure of an attempted health insurance exchange called Cover Oregon as the source of the problems processing eligibility data.

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek, D-Portland, and Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, who is a co-chair of the legislative subcommittee that handles OHA's budget, said Monday that the issues raised last week have not affected negotiations on the provider tax.

Oregon already taxes certain hospitals and long-term care providers, but the new tax could include insurers and coordinated care organizations, Steiner Hayward said Monday. Coordinated care organizations, or CCOs, are the regional networks of health care providers for Oregon Health Plan patients.

Steiner Hayward, a family physician, said people involved in provider tax talks — including legislators on both sides of the aisle, representatives of hospitals, insurers and CCOs — were already aware of the eligibility and enrollment problems at the Oregon Health Authority.

"I don't think the audit alert has affected anything," Steiner Hayward said. She argued that while some providers could lose money, that depends on how the tax is structured; and maintained "there's no downside" for the state when it comes to a provider tax, as it would help pay for the cost of expanding Medicaid coverage to more people, which she contends is good policy.

"I really think the entire state benefits when as many Oregonians as possible have access

to insurance," Steiner Hayward said.

State Rep. Julie Parrish, R-Tualatin/West Linn, argued last week that the eligibility problems were important in context of the provider tax discussions.

"Before we talk about raising \$575 million as part of a package for health care in this state, if there are people who are not eligible, and we're using those numbers as part of the eligibility, then I think we have a problem," Parrish said. "Because who is picking up the tab for hospital provider taxes, and insurance taxes, and CCO taxes? It's the actual taxpayer."

Parrish said in a phone interview Monday that she was not part of the private work group hammering out the tax. She maintained that the costs of the tax would be passed down to individual buyers of health insurance on private market.

Kotek said Monday that the Oregon Health Authority was reassessing its caseload, so the budget lawmakers pass by the end of session would not be based on old eligibility numbers.

Corrections

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

www.eastoregonian.com

To subscribe, call 1-800-522-0255
or go online to www.eastoregonian.com
and click on 'Subscribe'

East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and Dec. 25, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.
Copyright © 2017, EO Media Group

Subscriber services:
541-278-2669 • adirector@eastoregonian.com
Advertising Services: Laura Jensen
541-966-0806 • ljensen@eastoregonian.com

Multimedia Consultants:
• Terri Briggs
541-278-2678 • tbriggs@eastoregonian.com
• Danni Halladay
541-278-2683 • dhalladay@eastoregonian.com
• Jeanne Jewett
541-564-4531 • jjewett@eastoregonian.com
• Dayle Stinson
541-278-2670 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com
• Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827 • atreadwell@eastoregonian.com
• Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Didn't receive your paper? Call 1-800-522-0255 before noon Tuesday through Friday or before 10 a.m. Saturday for same-day redelivery

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Local home delivery	Savings off cover price
EZPay	\$14.50	41 percent
52 weeks	\$173.67	41 percent
26 weeks	\$91.86	38 percent
13 weeks	\$47.77	36 percent

*EZ Pay = one-year rate with a monthly credit or debit card/check charge

Single copy price:
\$1 Tuesday through Friday, \$1.50 Saturday

Advertising Director: Marissa Williams
541-278-2669 • adirector@eastoregonian.com
Advertising Services: Laura Jensen
541-966-0806 • ljensen@eastoregonian.com

Multimedia Consultants:
• Terri Briggs
541-278-2678 • tbriggs@eastoregonian.com
• Danni Halladay
541-278-2683 • dhalladay@eastoregonian.com
• Jeanne Jewett
541-564-4531 • jjewett@eastoregonian.com
• Dayle Stinson
541-278-2670 • dstinson@eastoregonian.com
• Angela Treadwell
541-966-0827 • atreadwell@eastoregonian.com
• Audra Workman
541-564-4538 • aworkman@eastoregonian.com

Classified & Legal Advertising
1-800-962-2819 or 541-278-2678
classifieds@eastoregonian.com or legals@eastoregonian.com

NEWS
• To submit news tips and press releases: • call 541-966-0818 • fax 541-278-8314 • email news@eastoregonian.com
• To submit community events, calendar items and Your EO News: email community@eastoregonian.com or call Tammy Malgesini at 541-564-4539 or Renee Struthers at 541-966-0818.
• To submit engagements, weddings and anniversaries: email rstruthers@eastoregonian.com or visit www.eastoregonian.com/community/announcements
• To submit a Letter to the Editor: mail to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.
• To submit sports or outdoors information or tips: 541-966-0838 • sports@eastoregonian.com

COMMERCIAL PRINTING
Production Manager: Mike Jensen
541-215-0824 • mjensen@eastoregonian.com

AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly sunny, breezy and cooler	Partly sunny with a shower	Pleasant and warmer	Plenty of sunshine	Mostly sunny

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

67°	45°	68°	47°	78°	52°	83°	53°	88°	57°
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

73°	48°	75°	46°	84°	52°	90°	55°	93°	58°
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	86°	52°
Normals	72°	49°
Records	95° (2001)	23° (1903)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.93"
Normal month to date 0.96"
Year to date 9.14"
Last year to date 5.54"
Normal year to date 6.07"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	92°	48°
Normals	74°	49°
Records	101° (1951)	30° (1964)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.43"
Normal month to date 0.83"
Year to date 6.31"
Last year to date 4.23"
Normal year to date 4.82"

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:15 a.m.
Sunset tonight	8:30 p.m.
Moonrise today	4:53 a.m.
Moonset today	7:12 p.m.

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Winds subsiding today with clouds and sun; showers around across the north.
Eastern and Central Oregon: Partly sunny and cooler today; pleasant in central parts and near the Cascades.
Western Washington: Mainly cloudy today. A couple of showers; only in the morning at the coast.
Eastern Washington: Partial sunshine today.
Cascades: Cooler today with times of sun and clouds; a couple of showers across the north.
Northern California: Times of clouds and sun today. Partly cloudy tonight. Clouds and sun tomorrow.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	60	47	sh	65	49	pc
Baker City	64	36	pc	62	36	pc
Bend	68	35	pc	67	39	pc
Brookings	66	48	pc	62	48	pc
Burns	68	32	pc	65	36	pc
Enterprise	60	37	pc	56	39	r
Eugene	66	42	pc	71	46	pc
Heppner	65	41	pc	67	43	pc
Hermiston	73	48	pc	75	46	pc
John Day	65	38	pc	64	41	pc
Klamath Falls	76	34	pc	72	39	pc
La Grande	63	42	pc	62	41	pc
Meacham	60	39	pc	60	39	pc
Medford	80	46	pc	81	50	pc
Newport	59	45	c	59	46	pc
North Bend	62	48	pc	62	49	pc
Ontario	76	47	pc	70	50	pc
Pasco	74	47	pc	74	47	pc
Pendleton	67	45	pc	68	47	pc
Portland	64	49	sh	74	53	pc
Redmond	69	33	pc	70	37	pc
Salem	65	45	pc	72	49	pc
Spokane	62	46	pc	65	47	pc
Ukiah	62	37	pc	60	38	pc
Vancouver	63	48	c	72	51	pc
Walla Walla	69	50	pc	69	51	pc
Yakima	73	46	pc	75	48	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	93	63	s	86	56	s
Hong Kong	84	73	t	82	74	r
Jerusalem	74	54	s	77	55	c
London	76	56	s	77	57	s
Mexico City	83	56	pc	81	56	pc
Moscow	72	55	pc	63	51	r
Paris	77	58	pc	81	58	s
Rome	77	58	pc	76	58	pc
Seoul	80	57	s	77	53	s
Sydney	72	53	c	67	52	s
Tokyo	77	69	c	75	67	sh

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Thursday
Boardman	WSW 10-20	NW 4-8
Pendleton	W 10-20	NW 6-12

UV INDEX TODAY

2 5 7 7 4 2

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.
0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2017

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: Rain will soak areas from the Midwest to a large part of the Southeast states today. Storms can be locally severe in southern Georgia and the Florida Peninsula. Most other areas will be free of rain.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 111° in Palm Springs, Calif. **Low** 22° in Aspen Springs, Colo.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thur.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	89	59	s	87	54	s
Atlanta	73	56	t	71	58	sh
Baltimore	63	56	pc	66	60	t
Birmingham	79	46	t	64	44	pc
Boise	72	44	pc	67	47	pc
Boston	64	52	pc	56	52	r
Charleston, SC	80	64	t	78	60	sh
Chicago	62	51	sh	67	51	pc
Cleveland	71	59	r	68	56	sh
Dallas	80	60	s	92	75	s
Denver	81	52	s	73	45	t
Detroit	70	58	r	68	54	sh
El Paso	96	72	s	97	70	s
Fairbanks	62	38	c	53	35	c
Fargo	68	48	s	68	49	pc
Honolulu	86	72	pc	85	70	sh
Houston	83	62	s	91	74	pc
Indianapolis	65	55	r	67	54	pc
Jacksonville	79	62	t	81	56	pc
Kansas City	65	45	pc	76	60	pc
Las Vegas	102	76	s	95	68	s
Little Rock	69	50	sh	79	64	s
Los Angeles	75	57	pc	66	57	pc
Louisville	67	57	r	69	58	sh
Memphis	69	54	c	77	64	s
Miami	92	78	t	88	76	t
Millwaukee	58	50	sh	62	50	pc
Minneapolis	66	51	pc	72	58	s
Nashville	69	55	sh	74	56	pc
New Orleans	77	60	pc	83	68	s
New York City	69	56	r	62	57	r
Oklahoma City	71	51	s	85	64	s
Omaha	62	48	pc	77	58	s
Philadelphia	72	56				