

Oregon commission mandates production of cleaner trucks

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**

Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's Environmental Quality Commission, a governor-appointed panel, has approved the Clean Trucks Rule, a mandate aimed at cutting emissions by requiring production of cleaner trucks.

Advocates say the rule will benefit the environment and public health; critics say it will hurt truck manufacturers and raise prices on trucks, which farmers and ranchers rely on for shipping.

The rule has two parts. First, it mandates manufacturers boost production of electric trucks. Second, it requires new medium- and heavy-duty diesel trucks sold in Oregon to meet stricter emissions standards.

The first rule requires up to half of the new medium- and heavy-duty trucks, buses and vans sold in Oregon by 2030 have no emissions, and up to 75% be electric by 2035. The second requires all new heavy-duty diesel vehicles sold in Oregon to emit 75% less nitrogen dioxide than current levels starting in 2025 and 90% less by 2027.

The rule only applies to manufacturers and does not require anyone to buy the trucks.

After California, Oregon is the second state to adopt the rule,

which will go into effect in 2024 and apply to 2025 or later models.

Advocates say the rule will decrease tailpipe pollution contributing to smog and ozone formation, promote cleaner air for disadvantaged communities and reduce diesel exhaust that may cause cancer, lung disease and other health problems.

"The transportation sector alone is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon, so this moves us toward cleaner air," said Rachel Sakata, senior air quality planner for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. "We're on a path to zero emissions."

Critics say the rule will raise the price of new trucks, will rapidly push a fleet of electric vehicles on a state that doesn't have sufficient infrastructure set up yet and will unfairly penalize truck manufacturers.

"It is never the right decision to increase the cost of goods, which these rules will do," said Shelly Boshart Davis, a state representative whose family runs a trucking business.

Trucking industry leaders estimate the price of a new heavy-duty electric truck will be \$58,000 more than a comparable diesel unit.

Sakata, of DEQ, confirmed that the \$58,000 estimate is reasonable

but she said that cost would be defrayed by long-term savings on fuel and maintenance.

Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of government affairs at the Oregon Farm Bureau, said because many businesses can't afford the higher price tag, she expects the rule will have the opposite of its intended effect, prompting businesses to buy trucks out-of-state or keep older trucks.

"You're gonna have folks holding onto vehicles for a lot longer than they would have," said Cooper. "Farm and ranch families and local Oregon businesses will actually be disincentivized from purchasing new trucks."

Jana Jarvis, president of Oregon Trucking Associations, a trade organization, said the Clean Trucks Rule most directly hurts truck manufacturers, who will be required to mass-produce electric trucks with no guarantee people will buy them.

In California, where an identical rule was approved last June, the state is pushing policies requiring agencies to buy electric trucks and offering businesses financial incentives. Oregon has no such policies.

The most obvious flaw with the new rule, critics say, is that Oregon lacks infrastructure. The state currently has only one large public



Don Jenkins/Capital Press, File

Oregon's Environmental Quality Commission, a state regulatory body, has approved the Clean Trucks Rule.

charging station for semi-trucks, in Portland.

"We have a real issue in our state with moving policies forward

with the mentality of, 'Oh, we'll get to building the infrastructure eventually,'" said Cooper, of the Farm Bureau.

Brown sets special session on rental aid, protection for tenants

By **PETERWONG**

Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown has called a special session of the Oregon Legislature to extend temporary protections against eviction for tenants awaiting rental assistance.

She also said she wants lawmakers at the Dec. 13 session to approve up to \$190 million to replenish rental assistance, until more federal money comes in, and to help tenants make the transition once that rental assistance ends next year.

More than 10,000 households have passed the 60-day grace period that lawmakers set during the 2021 session to prevent evictions if they have applied for rental assistance. (The "safe harbor" was set at 90 days by action of boards in Multnomah and Washington counties, and the Beaverton City Council.)

The Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services stopped accepting new applications for rental assistance as of 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 1. The agency announced weeks ago that pending applications — an estimated 20,000 await review — would exhaust Oregon's \$289 million allocation from the U.S. Treasury for assistance. It has paid applications for about 22,000 households with the help of extra staff, an outside vendor and community action agencies in Oregon counties.

Lawmakers set aside a total of \$200 million in state funds for rental assistance during a special session nearly one year ago. But all of that money was spent by June. "I am continuing to work with federal officials at U.S. Treasury and the White House to secure additional federal emergency rental assistance funding for Oregon, but it is clear that a state solution is needed to address the urgent and immediate needs of Oregon renters," Brown said Tuesday, Nov. 30 in her announcement of the special session.

"And, we must begin laying the groundwork now for the transition to local eviction prevention services after federal pandemic emergency programs draw to an end."

Senate President Peter Courtney, the Legislature's senior member, has gone through 26 of the 46 special sessions in Oregon history — counting the Dec. 13 meeting — and has presided over 11 of them. He has seen runaway

special sessions with no apparent ending, though he was not in charge of them.

"Special sessions are the most difficult of all sessions," the veteran Salem Democrat said. "Everything must be carefully planned. We have a lot of work to do. I hope we will be ready."

The Democratic leaders of the housing committees in both chambers say they have been working for months to craft a plan that can win legislative approval. The statement by Rep. Julie Fahey of Eugene and Sen. Kayse Jama of Portland said this:

"After months of work, we have developed a proposal to extend the state's bipartisan safe harbor protections and provide additional funds for direct rent assistance that will benefit both tenants and housing providers. As we head into the holiday season and the coldest winter months, this special session package will prevent heartbreaking evictions and support small housing providers who have made major sacrifices throughout the pandemic."

Representatives of Stable Homes for Oregon Families have taken part in the talks, as well as previous legislative efforts. Their statement:

"We also appreciate all the state lawmakers who have been working together on a solution. Tenants are counting on the legislature to ensure no one loses their home while their applications are pending and also to provide additional funding to help keep people safe and stable during this time of ongoing economic upheaval."

The Democratic majority leaders in both chambers, Sen. Rob Wagner of Lake Oswego and Rep. Barbara Smith Warner of Portland, are responsible for rounding up votes. Their statement:

"From the start of the pandemic, Oregon has committed to protecting individuals and families at risk of eviction. We can take action in a special session to ensure this doesn't happen and that we keep our promise to Oregonians. No one should lose their housing because of administrative delays."

No statements were issued so far by Republican leaders in either chamber.

Longtime Oregon Rep. Peter DeFazio won't seek reelection

PORTLAND (AP) —

Rep. Peter DeFazio, the longest serving U.S. House member in Oregon's history and a staunch advocate for environmental issues, said Wednesday, Dec. 1 that he is retiring and will not seek reelection next year.

The 74-year-old Democrat is the powerful chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

"With humility and gratitude I am announcing that I will not seek re-election next year. It has been the greatest honor of my life to serve as Congressman for the Fourth District of Oregon," DeFazio said in a statement.

While his announcement comes as his party faces a number of challenges ahead of the 2022 midterms, DeFazio's seat is

probably safe for Democrats. Oregon's 4th District covers the southwestern portion of the state, including coastal communities and the liberal university towns of Eugene and Corvallis.

DeFazio was first elected in 1986. The last time a Republican was elected to the seat was 1972.

In 2020 DeFazio faced a spirited challenge from Alek Skarlatos, a hero soldier-turned-Republican congressional candidate. In 2015, Skarlatos, a member of the Oregon National Guard, helped disrupt an attack on a train bound for Paris by a heavily armed man who was a follower of the Islamic State group.

DeFazio beat Skarlatos by 5 percentage points, his closest margin of victory in many years.

And while the GOP will see an opportunity in the 4th District next year, there will likely be many strong Democratic candidates as well. Democrats control the Legislature, all statewide elected offices, the two U.S. Senate seats and four of the five current U.S. House seats in Oregon.

"It's time for me to pass the baton to the next generation so I can focus on my health and well-being," DeFazio said, adding he will work for the rest of his term to help pass President Joe Biden's Build Back Better Act to address economic inequities and the climate crisis.

Originally from suburban Boston, DeFazio got an advanced degree in gerontology from the University of Oregon and later worked

as an aide to former Oregon Rep. Jim Weaver, who he succeeded, and as a county commissioner.

DeFazio touted among his accomplishments banning the export of logs from federal lands to protect old growth forests, protecting 390,000 acres (157,827 hectares) of wilderness in Oregon and increasing federal investment in infrastructure.

In a statement, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi praised DeFazio for his many years of service.

"Chairman Peter DeFazio is an absolute force for progress, whose 36 years of effective leadership in the House will leave a legacy that will benefit the Congress and Country for decades to come," Pelosi said.

COVID

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the holidays," said Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department. "My heart goes out to all of the family and friends of these two women, I'm so sorry for what they are going through."

Three county residents died during November after testing positive.

There were five deaths in the county during October, and a record six during September.

September was also the peak of the surge in infections driven by the more contagious delta variant. Baker County reported 465 cases during the month, breaking the previous record of 300 cases in August 2021.

Case numbers have dropped significantly during the fall, to 168 during October and to 143 in November, the fewest since July 2021 (91 cases).

Infections have been rising during the past two weeks, however.

During the first 15 days of November, the county had 54 cases.

There were 89 cases during the second half of the month.

Vaccination

In Baker County, 54.1% of residents 18 and older are fully vaccinated, according to OHA.

That's the fifth-lowest rate among Oregon's 36 counties.

Counties with lower vaccination rates include two that border Baker County — Grant (49.3%) and Malheur (48%). The two others will lower rates are Gilliam (49.9%) and Lake (44.3%).

Vaccination rates for other adjoining counties are 58.3% in Union (12th lowest) and Wallowa (68.7%, 16th highest rate).

In Baker County, the highest vaccination rate is among resident 65 and older, at 64.7%. The statewide rate for the age group is 82.2%.

Vaccination rates for other age ranges in Baker County:

- 50 to 64 — 49.3% (statewide, 73.2%)
- 20 to 49 — 38.7% (statewide, 69.3%)
- 18 to 19 — 44.9% (statewide, 57.5%)
- 12 to 17 — 22.8% (statewide, 58.9%)
- 5 to 11 — 5.6% have received a first dose (statewide, 20.5%)

Age breakdown

The Baker County

Health Department on Wednesday, Dec. 1 released the age breakdown of COVID-19 cases during the second half of November.

The biggest change, compared with the first half of the month, is the prevalence of cases among county residents 50 and older.

From Nov. 1-15, that age range accounted for 45.2% of the county's cases.

During the second half of the month — when the number of cases rose by 64.8% — 52.7% were in residents 50 or older.

The category with the biggest change was residents ages 50 to 59. For the first half of November, residents in their 50s accounted for 9.4% of cases. For the second half, that figure more than doubled, to 19.1%, almost one in every five cases. That was the largest percentage in any age group for that period.

There was an opposite trend for the county's youngest residents.

In the first half of

November, residents 9 and younger accounted for 17% of the county's cases. For the second half of the month, that age range accounted for 9% of cases.

The full breakdown:

- Ages 0-4
- Nov. 1-15 — 1.9%
- Nov. 16-30 — 3.4%
- Ages 5-9
- Nov. 1-15 — 15.1%
- Nov. 16-30 — 5.6%
- Ages 10-19
- Nov. 1-15 — 9.4%
- Nov. 16-30 — 7.9%
- Ages 20-29
- Nov. 1-15 — 7.6%
- Nov. 16-30 — 10.1%
- Ages 30-39
- Nov. 1-15 — 9.4%
- Nov. 16-30 — 11.2%
- Ages 40-49
- Nov. 1-15 — 11.3%
- Nov. 16-30 — 9%
- Ages 50-59
- Nov. 1-15 — 9.4%
- Nov. 16-30 — 19.1%
- Ages 60-69
- Nov. 1-15 — 11.3%
- Nov. 16-30 — 15.7%
- Ages 70-79
- Nov. 1-15 — 13.2%
- Nov. 16-30 — 6.7%
- Ages 80 and older
- Nov. 1-15 — 11.3%
- Nov. 16-30 — 11.2%

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