

Ferrioli demands ODOT director's resignation

Leader says faulty emissions data foiled transportation package

By Hillary Borrud
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, on Nov. 18 called for the state's top transportation official to resign.

Ferrioli accused Oregon Department of Transportation director Matthew Garrett and advisers to Gov. Kate Brown of withholding key carbon emissions information from Democratic and Republican lawmakers who were negotiating a transportation funding package earlier this year. Ferrioli cited public records released by ODOT and the Governor's Office.

Lawmakers gave up on the transportation funding proposal after Garrett revealed during the first public hearing June 24 that the plan would result in a smaller carbon emissions reduction than originally projected. ODOT staff had predicted smaller carbon reductions more than two weeks before the hearing, but did not pass that figure to lawmakers, according to emails released by Ferrioli's office.

Lawmakers have continued to question the transportation agency's management in recent months, and Brown acknowledged last week that ODOT needs to reassure lawmakers it is operating efficiently in order to build support for a possible 2017 transportation funding package.

The emissions calculations were a critical component of the 2015 transportation negotiations. Republicans had said they would only support an increase in the gas tax if Democrats agreed to repeal the state's low-carbon fuel standard, which takes effect in January and is supposed to reduce carbon emissions from transportation by up to 10 percent — 7.7 million metric tons — over the next decade.

Democrats said they would only consider replacing the fuel standard with a plan that would result in at least an equal reduction in carbon emissions. ODOT staff provided estimates that the state could achieve that through a package of alternative fuel incentives and spending to improve public transit and reduce traffic congestion.

One part of the plan in particular resulted in immediate skepticism by environmentalists: proposed technological improvements in traffic flows that were supposed to cut carbon emissions by 2.02 million metric tons over a decade. Together with other components of the plan, these improvements were supposed to reduce carbon emissions by as much as 9.1 million to 11.22 million metric tons over a decade.

Garrett said on June 24 the technological improvements would yield roughly 20 percent of the amount calculated originally for the bipartisan group, which meant the transportation package would no longer achieve the same amount of carbon reductions predicted from the low-carbon fuel standard.

Ferrioli revealed on Wednesday that he had also asked the governor to seek Garrett's resignation soon af-



EO Media Group

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ter the hearing.

"In June, following the implosion of transportation negotiations, I demanded Gov. Brown immediately request the resignation of Director Garrett due to gross incompetency at best and dishonest manipulation at worst," Ferrioli said in a written statement. "Whether Director Garrett knew the numbers ODOT provided the workgroup were wrong or he simply failed to provide the updated numbers in his possession, his decision to surprise workgroup members with new numbers in a public hearing without any advance warning led to the demise of a critical, bipartisan transportation infrastructure package for Oregonians that would have resulted in real carbon reduction."

Records obtained by Ferrioli's office showed as early as June 8, Garrett and Brown's sustainable communities and transportation policy adviser Karmen Fore received emails from ODOT staff with lower carbon reduction estimates. Amanda Pietz, manager of ODOT's transportation planning unit, wrote in the email that a computer model had predicted that \$400 million in technological improvements to improve traffic flow could reduce carbon emissions by 2.02 million metric

tons over a decade.

Nonetheless, transportation officials continued to provide documents to the bipartisan group of lawmakers negotiating the transportation package — known as the Gang of Eight — that showed the state could achieve the same 2.02 million metric ton reduction in carbon emissions at half the price, \$200 million over a decade.

The ODOT estimates continued to sink lower, with Garrett passing along an updated prediction of 0.87 million metric tons in carbon reduction from \$200 million in transportation improvements in a June 10 email to Fore and Brown's energy policy adviser Margi Hoffman. However, ODOT and the governor's advisers continued to tell lawmakers in updated briefing documents that they could achieve 2.02 million metric tons in carbon reductions for \$200 million.

On the eve of the legislative hearing on the transportation package, Garrett asked his staff to double-check the numbers. Angela Crowley-Koch, legislative director for the Oregon Environmental Council, also questioned the calculations in an email to ODOT assistant director Travis Brouwer that evening.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



The deadline for What's Happening items is 5 p.m. Friday. Call Cheryl at the Eagle, 541-575-0710.

THURSDAY, NOV. 26 Free Thanksgiving dinners

• 1 p.m., Teen Center, Prairie City

Everyone is welcome to a free, traditional Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings. For more information, or to arrange for a ride, call Prairie Baptist Church at 541-820-3696.

• 1-4 p.m., John Day Elks Lodge

A free holiday meal with ham, turkey and all the trimmings will be offered. Contributions of side dishes and desserts are welcome. The lounge will be open for pool, shuffleboard, card games and football on big screen TVs. Home deliveries are available for seniors, veterans and disabled people who live in John Day, Canyon City, Mt. Vernon and Prairie City. Call the lodge in advance to make arrangements. Volunteers are also needed to help cook, set up, clean up and deliver meals. For more information, call the lodge at 541-575-1824.

SATURDAY, NOV. 28 Canyon City holiday bazaar

• 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Canyon City Community Hall

Vendors will be selling a variety of goodies including handcrafted items, gifts in a jar, jewelry, fine art, furniture and more.

MONDAY, NOV. 30 Fair board planning meeting

• 5:30 p.m., Keerins Hall-north room, Grant County Fairgrounds, John Day

The Grant County Fair Board will hold a planning meeting to discuss the financial future of the Grant County Fairgrounds, to be presented to the County Court at a

future date.

TUES.-WED. DEC. 1-2

Spay and neuter clinic

• John Day River Veterinary Center
Dogs will be done on Tuesday and cats on Wednesday. The veterinary center is at 59989 Highway 26, west of John Day. Call 541-932-4428 for more information.

FRIDAY, DEC. 4

Carrie Young Memorial

• 5:30 p.m., John Day Elks Lodge

The annual by-donation spaghetti dinner, which includes silent and live auctions, supports the elderly in Grant County. Proceeds go toward the purchase of gifts and every day living items for patients in

local assisted living facilities, plus 150 home-bound elderly and handicapped people. To donate or for more information, contact Lucie Immoos at 541-620-2098.

SATURDAY, DEC. 5

Two holiday bazaars

• 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Grant County Fairgrounds, John Day

The Blue Mountain Hospital Auxiliary bazaar will be in Trowbridge Pavilion, and the fairgrounds bazaar will be in Keerins Hall. Together, they feature dozens of vendors offering an array of crafts and other goods. There will be several gift drawings in Keerins Hall, and soup and pie will be available in the Pavilion. Santa Claus will be there too, so bring your camera. Call the fair office, 541-575-1900.

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