[INSERT]
[COUNTY]
[LOGO]

October [ ], 2025

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
SH-531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
U.S. House of Representatives
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
U.S. House of Representatives
409 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maxine Dexter
U.S. House of Representatives
1207 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Val Hoyle
U.S. House of Representatives
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Janelle Bynum
U.S. House of Representatives
1508 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Andrea Salinas
U.S. House of Representatives
109 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear [Representative/Senator ___]

On behalf of [County Name's], thank you for the opportunity to submit our recommendations and priorities for the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization legislation. As Congress works to reauthorize vital surface transportation programs, we urge you to support policies that will help Oregon Counties and thousands of others succeed.

Counties are core owners and operators of the nation's transportation network. Together, we are responsible for 44 percent of public road miles and 38 percent of bridges, as well as more than one-third of public transit agencies and airports. Unfortunately, many county-owned and locally owned roads and bridges are in poor condition, far more often than those owned by states. For example, analysis from the Brookings Institution shows that 36 percent of locally owned road miles are classified as "poor condition," compared to 11 percent of state-owned roads.

Oregon counties are responsible for the largest share of Oregon's public road system, with over 32,000 miles and over 4,000 bridges. Statewide, nearly 5,000 county road miles and 2,355 county bridges are in poor or fair condition. Counties own half of all the bridges in Oregon, but are burdened with 76% of Oregon's structurally deficient bridges. A total of 987 county bridges have become restricted for heavy trucks in recent years.

Given the number of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure that counties own and the often-poor condition of those assets, it is clear that county-owned and locally owned infrastructure is holding back the quality and condition of the system overall.

If we want to achieve the shared goal of rebuilding America's infrastructure, we need to focus on the roads and bridges that require the most investment, especially those owned by counties like ours. This surface transportation reauthorization bill provides Congress with an opportunity to do so by enabling counties to access more funding, deliver projects more quickly, and make our transportation network safer.

To that end, [County Name's], the Association of Oregon Counties, and the Oregon Association of County Engineers and Surveyors, encourage Congress to:

- **Preserve the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP):** Oregon is first overall in federal road miles, first overall in federal road bridges, and fifth overall in federal land. FLAP is a critical program for Oregon counties that have an abundance of federal lands. We respectfully request that Congress maintain the current formula and support preservation and maintenance projects. Rural Oregon Counties preserve Americans' access to the great outdoors. Our preservation projects are a cost-effective and practical way to ensure that loggers, firefighters, and American families can safely drive our beautiful federal forests and America's frontier.

- **Restore the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS), Supporting Rural Roads:** For over 100 years, the federal government has shared logging revenue with local governments to offset lost revenue since federal land is withheld from private owners and businesses. Beginning in the late 1980s, the federal government greatly reduced logging on federal land to preserve spotted owl and salmon habitats. As logging revenue dramatically diminished, so did the timber funding for local roads that access those public timber lands. The last payment averaged only 4% of what it was in the 1990s. Unless there is an extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, Oregon county road departments will lose significant funding. This critical funding source keeps rural roads open and should be considered as part of any comprehensive surface transportation reauthorization.

- **Increase Local Access to Formula Dollars:** Every year, counties invest more than $146 billion in infrastructure nationwide. However, this spending still falls short of what is needed to keep our roads and bridges in good condition. While we would like to invest more, many counties operate under state-imposed restraints on our ability to generate additional revenue, in turn limiting how much we can spend.

  Federal funding can help counties fill the gap, but the vast majority of federal transportation funds flow through FHWA's formula programs to state departments of transportation. While some states prioritize sharing these funds with counties, cities, and towns, research shows that, on average, only 14 percent of these funds reach local governments.

  Increasing counties' access to these funds, whether through suballocation, enhanced project selection authority, or other methods, would help us pave more roads, fix more bridges and complete more projects in our communities. This would make a big difference in improving the disparity between the conditions of locally owned and state-owned infrastructure and improving the system as a whole.

- **Preserve and Improve Discretionary Grants:** While expanding formula funding access is key, discretionary grants remain vital for counties to fund discrete projects and larger initiatives. Programs like the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, the BUILD program, the Bridge Investment Program, and the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program have been crucial for county-led initiatives.

  Congress should also work to reform the process of both applying for and implementing a federal grant. Complex applications create barriers for rural counties and counties with limited resources, and signing and executing grant agreements leads to delays and higher costs. Congress and the Department of Transportation should find ways to streamline the overall process so that more counties and communities can benefit from federal grant opportunities.

- **Reform Permitting but Preserve Local Consultation:** Current permitting regulations are cumbersome and outdated, increasing project costs and timelines. Congress can address this issue in several ways, including through the creation of new categorical exclusions for small projects (under a cost threshold), projects within existing right-of-way, and those focused primarily on safety.

  However, efforts to speed up permitting must not remove local consultation requirements. Allowing for input from county leaders ensures that projects are considerate of community needs, which can ultimately save time later in the process. The federal government should not exclude counties from the process in its attempts to reduce project timelines.

- **Support Locally Led Safety Work:** Counties have a critical role to play in reducing roadway fatalities. We know best where there are unsafe roads or intersections that need to be addressed to save lives. Congress should ensure that counties can access federal funding—either formula or discretionary—to plan and implement safety improvements in their communities.

- **Work with Local Governments during Regulatory Processes:** While consultation with counties is critical when drafting new regulations, it is also important when

withdrawing or amending existing ones as well. Given the Administration's stated goals of significantly reducing the number of regulations on the books, counties encourage you to consult with us early in the process to ensure there are no unwanted or unintended consequences.

- **Invest in Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** Rural counties are critical to the national transportation network but often lack the staff, funding, and expertise needed to compete for funding, meet match requirements, and comply with regulations. Continued support for initiatives like ROUTES, streamlined application and reporting processes, and expanded technical assistance will help all counties fully access federal resources to meet local needs.

We look forward to working with you and other partners to ensure the next surface transportation reauthorization bill gives all levels of government the resources they need to maintain their portions of the transportation network. The system can only succeed if all levels of ownership can succeed, and supporting the priorities mentioned above will enable counties to better support our significant part of the system.

In addition to our submission, [County Name's] proudly supports the National Association of Counties' (NACo) submission, which provides a more detailed outline of the policy goals of counties nationwide.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering Oregon counties' priorities.

Sincerely,

[NAMES]
[SIGNATURES]
[COUNTY LOGO]