

OPINION

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GUEST OPINION

Legislature needs to fill the transportation funding pothole

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Oregon strongly urges the Oregon legislature to adopt a robust transportation package before lawmakers adjourn this session.

The need to repair, modernize and expand our current transportation system has never been greater. As federal inaction continues, it is imperative that Oregon's legislative leaders work together to support investment in our crucial roads, bridges and other transportation facilities.

Any delays will negatively affect Oregon's economy and quality of life, as well as make needed investments more expensive and more difficult to accomplish.

As Oregon's leading organization of professional engineers, our members are on the front lines of repairing and maintaining Oregon's aging roads and bridges. We see the statewide need for investment on local roads, state highways and the interstate system.

More funding will help ensure our economy has the critical transportation system needed to support existing businesses. It would also help attract and expand new and emerging industries and job creators.

It is from this intimate knowledge that we can confidently share our call to action. The system needs funds to maintain current service levels. Without additional resources, Oregon's state, county and city leaders will have to make difficult decisions regarding which projects get taken care of at the expense of others.

A recent letter from mayors across Oregon to legislators indicated that cities are facing an annual shortfall of more than \$300 million in street maintenance budgets alone. This significant budget shortfall is causing



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cities to defer needed maintenance and repairs, and will only increase the cost and complexity of these projects in the future.

Similarly, Oregon's rural counties must decide what paved roads will return to gravel and what bridges will be either weight-limited or closed due to acute maintenance funding shortages. These real impacts to rural

roadways will significantly affect the ability and cost to move products from farm to market.

This places Oregon businesses at a competitive disadvantage to surrounding states that have either passed (Idaho) or will likely pass (Washington) transportation packages this year.

Oregon's engineering community believes that roads, bridges, and other transportation facilities are good investments. Potholes, congestion and a declining economy are detriments to all Oregonians.

The transportation system needs are real, the declining buying power of today's transportation dollars is real and so is the need for our Governor and legislative leaders to agree on a significant transportation package in the 2015 session. Oregon's engineers and many others are here to help.