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Wyden Hearing Statement on the Challenges to the Future of Highway Funding
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America's transportation arteries give life to America's economy. Now, they need major surgery, but instead, the patient is bleeding out. And short-term funding Band-Aids won't help without a solid long-term plan in place to solve the crisis.

My bottom line is that you can't have a big-league economy with little-league infrastructure. But the way Congress has limped from one short-term funding patch to the next more than thirty times is unquestionably a little-league strategy.

The stop-and-go approach without a viable long-term funding source lowers our sights in terms of what our transportation system can do. It forces states and federal agencies into making little plans – barely keeping up with the potholes and falling far behind on new railways, ports, and highways.

Oregonians are driving across bridges that are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. They're swerving around ruts on mountain passes that threaten to cause dangerous accidents. They're sitting in traffic jams, burning through gas and wasting time.

The infrastructure crisis hurts our businesses and discourages investment in Oregon and across the land. China invests more than four times the amount the U.S. does in infrastructure. Europe invests twice as much as the U.S. The fact is, the costs associated with transportation and infrastructure are always a part of the calculus when a company is deciding where to invest and who to hire.

One recent report from the American Society of Civil Engineers said that the U.S. needs to invest \$3.7 trillion in infrastructure by 2020 – and \$1.7 trillion in transportation infrastructure alone – just to reach "good condition." Another series of short-term patches won't meet that bar. And in the meantime, the same report found that Oregonians spend more than \$650 million a year on auto repairs and other costs because roads and highways are crumbling.

It's my view that funding a transportation network is right up there with maintaining a fair judicial system and a strong national defense among the most basic and necessary functions of government. There is a bipartisan understanding that our transportation system needs major investments – you hear the same messages from Democrats and Republicans on this issue.

So Congress – and this committee – have a responsibility to find a pathway that leads to a long-term funding source. I hope today's hearing reinforces the enormous need to accomplish that goal and helps us move closer to a solution.

Next week, the committee is going to continue its consideration of this crucial topic in a hearing on how to get private dollars off the sidelines and into the game on infrastructure. Several weeks ago, Senator Hoeven and I introduced the Move America Act to kick-start the use of effective financing tools to help solve this crisis. I strongly believe Move America is going to be a big part of what gets our infrastructure back up to the big-leagues, and I look forward to continuing the discussion next week.

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