



# Oregon Department of Transportation Agency History

By Gary D. Halvorson, 2009

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## Introduction

The mission of Oregon's Department of Transportation (ODOT) is to provide a safe and efficient multi- modal transportation system supporting economic opportunity and livable communities within Oregon. ODOT was established in 1969 (ORS 184.615) to "bring together programs that meet the objectives of contributing to the growth and economy of the state by providing for the movement of persons and goods rapidly, safely, and economically; by protecting people and property through the effective administration of driver, motor vehicle, and aviation laws; and by meeting the recreational needs of Oregonian's and touring visitors by providing recreational facilities."

ODOT develops and administers Oregon's system of highways and their infrastructure; public transportation services; rail passenger and freight systems; bicycle and pedestrian paths and routes; ports and marine transportation; pipelines; transportation safety programs; driver and vehicle licensing and registration; and the enforcement of statutes, policies, and procedures relating to commercial motor carrier's.

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## **Agency History – Current Organization**

ODOT's five geographic regions carry out the Department's programs statewide. Each region oversees the department's transportation operations. Regions work with local city and county governments to deliver transportation services. Each region is comprised of numerous districts.

Region 1 Metro Area (Portland)

Region 2 Northwest Oregon (Salem)

Region 3 Southwest Oregon (Roseburg)

Region 4 Central Oregon (Bend)

Region 5 Eastern Oregon (La Grande)

ODOT's districts provide maintenance and repair services on a scheduled and as needed basis to the transportation infrastructure including but not limited to rest areas, roads, bridges, and guard rails/restraint technology.

The Central Services Division provides services which support agency staff and the department's overall mission in the fields of Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Services, Internal Audit Services, Office of Civil Rights, Support Services, Communications.

The Driver and Motor Vehicles Division is responsible for regulating vehicles and drivers in Oregon by issuing vehicle registrations, titles, and driver licenses to Oregon citizens. DMV has field offices located throughout the state. The Driver and Motor Vehicles Division is comprised of five service groups.

The Highway Division develops, operates, and maintains Oregon's system of highways, which range from six-lane limited-access freeways with metered ramps in the Metro area to a gravel highway connecting Prineville and Brothers. The Division is responsible for providing and supporting a safe and efficient highway transportation system supporting economic opportunity and livability in Oregon.

The Motor Carrier Transportation Division regulates the commercial operations of truckers using Oregon's roads and highways. Regulating these operations is a multi-faceted job. Motor Carrier promotes a safe, efficient and responsible commercial transportation industry by simplifying compliance, reducing regulatory requirements where appropriate and preserving the infrastructure while recognizing the vital economic interests of the commercial transportation industry.

The Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA) provides funding to select highway construction projects including the improvement of pavement conditions, increasing lane capacity, and improvement of bridges. OTIA originated in 2001. In 2003 Governor Kulongoski signed OTIA III, which provided 2.5 billion s in funding through bond sales for transportation repair and improvements. OTIA is overseen by the Highway Division.

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The Public Transit Division develops and encourages the use of transit, ridesharing, walking, bicycling, telecommuting and other alternatives to motorist driving alone. Oregon's public transit systems provide 1187 million rides a year. Public Transit offers training and technical assistance to communities and transportation service providers and encourages connections between systems.

The Rail Division regulates aspects of the rail industry for safety and service. Freight and passenger rail in Oregon consist of more than 2,500 miles of railroads with more than 2,600 railroad crossings. This Division actively promotes programs designed to prevent crashes and injuries at highway railroad grade crossings and on railroad property.

The Transportation Development Division guides and supports short- and long-range needs of Oregon's transportation system. Planners work closely with local officials. Goals include developing an efficient transportation system, maintaining livability and stretching insufficient funds. In addition, staff provide policy and economic analysis, strategic planning, research and program development help. The Division manages and analyzes transportation data. Much of the data is used to assess the current conditions or to track statistics for transportation facilities, programs and systems. Analyzing the data helps program managers make best use of resource. Staff help find ways both to foster growth and improve the safety and efficiency of the state transportation system. Methods also are designed to keep communities livable and economically healthy.

The Transportation Safety Division works with numerous partners including other state agencies, local agencies, non-profit groups, Native American Nations, and the private sector. By working with these partners, transportation safety is promoted through education, enforcement and engineering. Major programs focus on passenger protection, impaired driving, speed, youthful drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, work zones, safety corridors and employers. Staff members implement these programs through more than 100 grants and contracts awarded annually.

### **Boards, Commissions, Panels**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is an eight member, Governor appointed body advising the Oregon Department of Transportation on matters regarding the regulation of bicycle and pedestrian traffic and the establishment of bikeways and pathways.

The Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee provides advice to ODOT and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to develop programs for managing the scenic highway in the Columbia River Gorge.

The Committee is comprised of 10 appointed individuals with the Governor making three of the appointments.

The Governor's Advisory Committee on DUII, working in conjunction with the Traffic Safety Division, formulates administrative and legislative objectives for reducing the incidence of driving under the influence, monitors their implementation, and heightens public awareness of DUII issues and dangers through education.

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The Governor's Advisory Committee on Motorcycle Safety seven Governor appointed members provide advice to the Traffic Safety Division on issues and concerns pertaining to motorcycling in Oregon.

The Oregon Transportation Commission develops and maintains state transportation policy and planning for a multi-modal transportation system, which fosters economic growth, safety, and environmental protection thereby enhance livability for all Oregonians. The Governor appoints the Commissions' five members.

The Transportation Safety Committee provides advice on long range highway safety planning and approves grant funding of transportation safety programs funded and managed by the Traffic Safety Division. The Committee is comprised of five, Governor appointed members.

### **Agency History – 1843-1913**

The focus of the early Provisional and Territorial Government on transportation matters centered on roads and waterways and the establishment of road districts and road supervisors. All men over 21 were accountable for two days of labor in their road district each year. Fees were accepted in lieu of physical labor or the provision of implements, horses, or oxen to the road project (1843-1849 Oregon Territorial Law, General and Special Laws, Page 17). The Clackamas Bridge Company was authorized to construct a toll bridge "not less than twelve feet wide" to enable crossings by wagon, horses, and cattle across the Clackamas River (1843-1849 Oregon Territorial Law, General and Special Laws, Page 30). Pilotage on the Columbia River was limited from the Columbia Bar to the Willamette River (1843- 1849 Oregon Territorial Law, General and Special Laws, Page 46). Authorization was also granted for two ferries at Oregon City (1843-1849 Oregon Territorial Law, General and Special Laws, Pages 73 and 75). Also in that first session, "John McLoughlin, his heirs, and assigns" were authorized to construct a canal around Willamette Falls on the east side of the river (1843-1849 Oregon Territorial Law, General and Special Laws, Page 81).

On September 19, 1849 the Territorial Legislature passed an act that established a system for governing pilotage on the Columbia and Willamette rivers. The act required the establishing of a Board of Commissioners responsible for control the industry including setting policy and procedures, investigating complaints and taking action against negligent pilots.

The Territorial Government in 1852 authorized numerous territorial roads primarily spanning the west side of the Cascades and the Columbia River Gorge (1852-3 Oregon Territorial Law).

The late 1850's realized two pieces of legislation concerning marine traffic on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers (1857 Oregon Territorial Law, page 52 and 1859 Oregon Law, page 43) and the establishment of Port Wardens in 1859 (1859-1860 Oregon Territorial Law, page 26).

The Legislative Assembly of 1864 passed an act that established a system for governing pilotage on the Umpqua River. The act required the establishing of a Board of Commissioners responsible for controlling the industry including setting policy and procedures, investigating complaints and taking action against negligent pilots.

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In the 1870's legislative focus turned to road expansion and the extension of the railroad into Oregon. 1870 brought an exemption for firemen from having to do roadwork (1870 Oregon Law, Chapter 76). In 1872 the Legislative Assembly approved funds for the construction of a "free" bridge over the Umpqua River at Winchester on the state highway (1872 Oregon Law, page 62).

The Northern Pacific Railroad in was permitted by the Legislative Assembly to bring rail and telegraph lines to Oregon (1874 Oregon Law, pg. 101). That year as well, the Oregon Central Pacific Railway and Telegraph Line was granted military railway and road construction contracts to connect Oregon to the Eastern seaboard by rail (1874 Oregon Law, pg. 103).

In 1880 the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company laid track between Whitman, Washington and Blue Mountain, Oregon and by mid-1882, a rail line was completed to Portland.

Realizing the need for industry regulation, the State Legislative Assembly in 1887 established the Board of Railroad Commissioners responsible for the regulation of railroad operations within the state (OL 1887 Ch. LXXIII). Originally the board was composed of two commissioners appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate. In 1889 the board expanded to include three members and provided for the assumption by the Board of regulatory duties for warehouses.

By the late 1880's and early 1890's the means for paying for a transportation infrastructure was a primary focus of the Legislative Assembly. In 1889 the payments made in lieu of each day's roadwork are lowered to \$1.50 per day, except for petitioners for county roads, who continue to pay \$2 or do a day's labor opening the road (1889 Oregon Law, Chapter 76). Counties with populations over 10,000 were allowed to levy a property tax and a \$2 per person poll tax, both dedicated solely to road building purposes (1889 Oregon Law, Chapter 76). In 1893 another form of raising money was introduced when counties were allowed to levy a \$2 poll tax dedicated to county road expenses. County general funds were also made available for building bridges (1893 Oregon Law, Chapter 76).

In 1898 the Legislative Assembly abolished the Board of Railroad Commissioners.

The first automobile arrived in Oregon in 1899 and was owned by E. Henry Wemme. In 1903 much of Oregon's road legislation was changed, repealed or replaced by HB 280 (1903 Oregon Law, page 262). That bill established a new act for county roads, road districts, taxation and infrastructure spending for Oregon.

In 1905 just two years after the first Model A rolled off the production line, the state began registering automobiles with the Secretary of State's office for a \$3 fee (1905 Oregon Law, Chapter 136). Registration certificates were to be "displayed on the back of such automobile, motor vehicle or motorcycle in light-colored Arabic numerals, at least three inches high, on a dark background." Chapter 136 also focused on the duties of the driver by stating that drivers should take every precaution not to spook horses or go faster than 8 miles per hour. Violations were declared misdemeanors punishable by fines.

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The Legislative Assembly, realizing a continuing need for industry regulation, created the Railroad Commission (1907 Oregon Law, Chapter 53) to maintain oversight of the railroad industry by monitoring rates, schedules, service, and infrastructure. The Commission was appointed by the Governor, the Secretary of State, and the State Treasurer and consisted of members who would geographically represent the state's interests.

By 1909, the Legislative Assembly enacted legislation on behalf of the railroad industry. The Railroad Commission was granted authority to prescribe contracts for the shipping of livestock and prohibit discrimination against any locality along Oregon's railroads (1909 Oregon Law, Chapters 169 and 97).

In 1909 also marked a great vision for Oregon's infrastructure in Senate Concurrent Resolution Number 22, which outlined the need for a bridge spanning the Columbia River at Portland. A legislative committee was formed to meet with a like committee from Washington State "to initiate this movement for an interstate bridge across the Columbia" (1909 Senate Concurrent Resolution Number 22, page 490). That year another bridge, over the Snake River at Ontario, was also provided funding to commence construction on the Oregon - Idaho border (1909 Oregon Law, Chapter 106).

The annual renewal of motor vehicle license began in 1911 with graduated fees introduced based upon the vehicles horsepower. Motorcycles were registered for \$3 and vehicles over 40 horsepower were registered from \$10.

Chauffeur registration also began in 1911 (1911 Oregon Law, Chapter 174). The first registered chauffeur was William M. Hodson of Medford. In 1911 the commissioning of railroad track scales was added to the Railroad Commissions duties (OL 1911 Ch. 57). In 1912 the Railroad Commission assumed responsibility for supervising and regulating public utilities except for those operated by municipal organizations.

Oregon's beach highway law went into effect in 1913 after a speech by Governor Oswald West (1913 Oregon Law, Chapter 47). The legislation intended to keep beaches undeveloped to allow motorists beach access between the low and high tidelines. That year the state highway system was also established to "get Oregon out of the mud."

The State Highway Commission was formed and its members included Governor Oswald West, Secretary of State Ben Olcott, and State Treasurer Thomas Kay. The Commission was charged with monitoring the construction of state highways and the actions of the State Highway Engineer (1913 Oregon Law, Chapter 146). The first state highway plan was approved in 1914.

## **Agency History – 1914-1939**

The first state highway plan was approved in 1914. In 1915 the Railroad Commission of Oregon was renamed the Public Service Commission to accurately reflect the commissions broad scope of interest and involvement in regulation (OL 1915 Ch. 241). The Public Service Commission continued to regulate the rail industry in Oregon. Initially, Public Service Commissioners were elected by popular vote but from 1927 onwards commission members were appointed.

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The only counties with paved sections of roadway by 1916 were Multnomah, Clatsop, and Jackson counties. The Columbia River Highway was dedicated in 1916 and was paved from Portland to Multnomah Falls.

The makeup of the State Highway Commission shifted from elected officials to volunteer citizen members (1917 Oregon Law, Chapter 237). Notable is that between 1917 and 1918 forty bridges were built in Oregon.

In 1919, ten years after the first discussions of the Portland-Vancouver Interstate Bridge project, another act was passed by the Legislative Assembly that acknowledged the intergovernmental agreements and provided additional funding to the project (1909 Oregon Law, Chapter 328). The act also made provision that Multnomah County would be responsible for maintaining the structure after completion. The 1919 Legislative Assembly prohibited billboards and similar advertising on the Columbia River Highway (1919 Oregon Law, Chapter 20).

Securing funds for county road, bridge, and culvert construction was a priority for the 1921 Legislative Assembly (1921 Oregon Law, Chapter 382). Also addressed that session was the authorization for a bridge spanning the lower Columbia River at a location "over the Columbia River as near the Pacific Ocean as may be practicable" (1921 Oregon Law, Chapter 20) and the redefinition of the roles and duties of the Port of Portland (1921 Oregon Law, Chapter 76).

The 1923 Legislative Assembly recognized two entities that shaped Oregon - The Oregon Trail and the agriculture industry. The Legislative Assembly designated the road from Idaho to the Pacific Ocean as the "Old Oregon Trail" route and authorized signage depicting a prairie schooner and a team of oxen to mark the route for modern day travelers (1923 Oregon Law, Chapter 3). In addition Oregon Law provided for agricultural transport on public highways with permission from the State Highway Commission despite the spiked wheels on many pieces of agricultural machinery (1923 Oregon Law, Chapter 61).

In 1925 Legislative Assembly added definition to Oregon law regarding infrastructure issues, commercial operators, as well as acceptable motorist conduct. Bridge repair and construction plans were to be approved by the State Highway Engineer before the work was undertaken (1925 Oregon Law, Chapter 47). Oregon Law provided for the generation of revenue from corporations and individuals who were deemed "motor carriers" by using their vehicle for business, permits were also issued and fees established for motor carriers, and truck weight limits were also set into law (1925 Oregon Law, Chapter 308). Profane, abusive or obscene language near or upon any public highway was forbidden and punishable by a fine up to \$500 or six months in jail (1925 Oregon Law, Chapter 105). The Legislative Assembly also made it unlawful to drive, run or operate any motor vehicle while "in an intoxicated condition or under the influence of intoxicating liquor." On the first offense, the sheriff was to detain the motor vehicle, not the intoxicated individual, for up to six months (1925 Oregon Law, Chapter 182).

Arguably the most lasting effort of the 1925 Legislative Assembly was the authorization for the State Highway Commission to purchase land beyond 300 feet of the roadway for "parks, parking places, camp sites, public squares and recreation grounds" (1925 Oregon Law, Chapter 201). This authorization provided the skeletal structure of the modern Oregon State Park system.

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There was major amending and revising of traffic law in 1927 that redefined the duties of drivers, passengers, and witnesses to motor accidents. Pedestrians were to use the left-hand side of the road and the speed of vehicles was adjusted dependant on the type of tires, solid or pneumatic, on the vehicle (1927 Oregon Law, Chapter 217). That year the state highway commission was also authorized to purchase the Vancouver-Portland interstate bridge from Multnomah County and to make the bridge a "free bridge" absent of any tolls (1927 Oregon Law, Chapter 301).

In 1929 it became the responsibility of railroads to "erect and thereafter maintain good and sufficient lawful fences on both sides of its or his railroad line" with provisions made for public crossings in both town and country (1929 Oregon Law, Chapter 221). Bicycles were to be operated with both front and rear lights to render "sufficient lumination" (1929 Oregon Law, Chapter 328). Motorists were not left out in 1929, as they were instructed that "no person shall drive any vehicle upon a highway at such a speed as to endanger the life, limb or property of any person" (1929 Oregon Law, Chapter 186). 1929 was also the year the State Parks Commission was organized and its first chairman, H.B. VanDuzer, was appointed by the governor.

The early 1930s saw rapid development of parks in Oregon as participants in Depression era work relief programs made improvements on many state parks. 1931 brought a name change to the Roosevelt Coast Military Highway, as it became the Oregon Coast Highway (1931 Oregon Law, Chapter 90). The Board of Pilot Commissioners became responsible for providing regulation, licensing, and enforcement of pilots operating in the Coos Bay area (1930 Oregon Law, Chapter 65). In 1933 the Legislative Assembly enacted a law prohibiting airplanes from disturbing waterfowl (1933 Oregon Law, Chapter 174). 1931 saw the replacement of the Public Service Commission with the Public Utility Commissioner who, appointed by the Governor and requiring senate confirmation, served a four-year term and retained the powers and responsibilities of the Public Service Commission, including the regulation of Oregon's rail industry (OL 1931 Ch. 103 Sec. 1).

The Legislative Assembly marked an increase in addressing transportation issues in 1935. That year liability was extended to operators of steamboats for injury to persons or property due to their actions under Oregon Law (1935 Oregon Law, Chapter 34).

That year as well the Legislative Assembly added additional distinctions to the types of motor carriers identified by the Legislative Assembly. Contract carrier, private carrier, and special carriers were all defined and laws created to regulate each category (1935 Oregon Law, Chapter 415). 1935 also marked the creation of the Travel Information Bureau under the State Highway Commission. The Legislative Assembly authorized the commission to compile, publish, and disseminate information including historical facts, data, and maps about parks, recreation areas, and other public places in the state (1935 Oregon Law, Chapter 195).

In 1937 the Legislative Assembly dictated that locomotives must have front and rear lights to lawfully operate in Oregon (1937 Oregon Law, Chapter 323). Motorists were also a focus in 1937 as the Legislative Assembly formed educational programs in schools for the prevention of highway accidents (1937 Oregon Law, Chapter 63) and outlined the use of flares, lanterns, and

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flags for disabled trucks and busses. Aforementioned vehicles could not operate from a half-hour before sundown to a half-hour prior to sunrise without 3 such items on board. The flares, lanterns, or flags had to produce light for at least 12 hours visible a distance of 500 feet. The law also wisely instructed those driving vehicles hauling "inflammable gases" that "no open burning flare shall be placed adjacent to any such last-mentioned vehicle" (1937 Oregon Law, Chapter 327).

Oregon's first weight limits were placed on logging trucks (1939 Oregon Law, Chapter 369) and the Legislative Assembly passed an act prohibiting livestock from running at large on the Oregon Coast Highway (1939 Oregon Law, Chapter 470)..

## **Agency History – 1940-1968**

1941 was a busy year for transportation concerns in the Legislative Assembly. Centennial license plates for motor vehicles were planned for use in 1943 (1941 Oregon Law, Chapter 255). Motorcycles were required to have front and rear illumination for the purposes of visibility (1941 Oregon Law, Chapter 69). Logging trucks were instructed to obtain operating permits by the county courts and the State Highway Commission for trucks over fifty feet in length (1941 Oregon Law, Chapter 55).

Diverse transportation issues including interstate ferry authorization by the State Highway Commission (1943 Oregon Law, Chapter 196) and the Commission being granted authorization to construct tunnels (1943 Oregon Law, Chapter 384) were addressed in 1943. The Legislative Assembly transferred the authority of the Champoeg Provisional Government Park to the State Highway Commission (1943 Oregon Law, Chapter 128). The Legislative Assembly also addressed oversized truck and trailer permits (1943 Oregon Law, Chapter 266), and the annual transfer of money from the motor carrier transportation fund to the State Police account (1943 Oregon Law, Chapter 328).

As Oregon's focus shifted to World War II, the volume of transportation issues decreased markedly in the Legislative Assembly. Logging trucks were required to have fire-fighting equipment on board (1945 Oregon Law, Chapter 55) and the expiration of all motor vehicle licenses was extended to expire in 1947 (1945 Oregon Law, Chapter 9). The Legislative Assembly also authorized a windshield sticker for licensing purposes on motor vehicles (1945 Oregon Law, Chapter 2).

The use of Oregon beaches as a public highway regulated by the State Highway Commission with authority to monitor activity, grant access, and act accordingly in that area (1947 Oregon Law, Chapter 493). The Oregon House of Representatives passed House Joint Resolution 18 at the request of a federation of Oregon garden clubs to designate Highways 99 West and 99 East as 'Blue Star' highways. The blue star designation was to commemorate the Oregon men and women who served in World War II.

In 1948 the architectural firm of Whitehouse, Church, Newberry and Roehr was selected to design the new State Highway Building in Salem. The same firm had designed the Public Service Building and was involved with the design of the State Capitol.

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The gas tax and automobile registration fees increased in 1949 (1949 Oregon Law, Chapters 379 and 380). That year as well Oregon became the first state to prorate registration fees of commercial vehicles based upon the miles traveled within the state (Oregon Law, Chapter 381).

The first permanent Oregon license plates were issued in 1950 with black numbers on a silver background. At that time there were 718,420 vehicles registered in Oregon. When the Legislative Assembly met in 1951, the primary transportation focus was road and highway issues. Chapter 587 outlined the right of access to state roads by adjacent property owners and Chapter 289 provided for the establishment, maintenance and operation of an arboretum and botanical garden by the State Highway Division. Emergency vehicles and funeral processions were also instructed to have flashing lights mounted on their vehicles (1951 Oregon Law, Chapter 400).

The mid 1950's were fairly quiet for transportation issues in the Legislative Assembly. Additions to Oregon law concerning truck routes (1953 Oregon Law, Chapter 257) and highway advertising signs (1955 Oregon Law, Chapter 541) were both made.

In 1955, the State Department of Motor Vehicles was established. That action transferred some duties and personnel from the Office of the Secretary of State to the new department (1955 Oregon Law, Chapter 294). The department's mandate included "the administration of laws relating to motor vehicle registration and licensing, dealers' business and vehicle licenses and wreckers' licenses...". Also in 1955, speed traps were defined (1955 Oregon Law, Chapter 462) and the statute also provided for the use of "radiomicro waves" by law enforcement and the marking of all speed traps by signs. The State Highway Commission was to oversee the sign installation for Oregon State Police speed traps. The motor vehicle speed limit in 1955 was 55 mph for open highways (1955 Oregon Law, Chapter 38) trucks and school busses had a maximum speed of 45 mph and emergency vehicles were exempted from speed limits (1955 Oregon Law, Chapter 598).

The 1957 Legislative Assembly outlined state highway routes in Oregon, including the Mt. Hood and Sunset highways (1957 Oregon Law, Chapter 123). An additional fee was added to driver licenses and renewals to fund the cost of high school drivers training courses (1957 Oregon Law, Chapter 206). Another notable event of 1957 was the installation of an IBM 650 computer system by the State Highway Department making it the first computer system in Oregon State government.

The Legislative Assembly renamed the Parks Division the Parks and Recreation Division (1959 Oregon Law, Chapter 611). This reflected the division's secondary activity of promoting recreational facilities and programs established and maintained by local governments. The legislation also created the position of state recreation director who reported to the state parks superintendent. In addition the Legislative Assembly disbanded the Oregon Tunnel Commission (1959 Oregon Law, Chapter 30). The "Pacific Wonderland" slogan license plates issued. The slogan was based on a winning high school contest entry.

The first state scenic areas adjacent to highways was established in 1961. The Scenic Commission was formed and the members were appointed by the Governor to manage such

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areas (1961 Oregon Law, Chapter 614). Other issues addressed by the Legislative Assembly included private aircraft licensure (1961 Oregon Law, Chapter 107), pedestrian control measures (1961 Oregon Law, Chapter 254), and the designation of gross vehicle weight on all motor trucks, truck trailers and semi-trailers (1961 Oregon Law, Chapter 255). The first bill attempting to establish the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) was introduced in the Legislative Assembly but failed to gain enough support to become law.

The severe Columbus Day storm of 1962 (October 12) caused millions of dollars of damage to the infrastructure of the State Highway Department.

The 1963 Legislative Assembly established a penalty for the discharging of bows and arrows on a railroad right of way (1963 Oregon Law, Chapter 94). Railroads were now required to seek State Highway Commission approval before changing crossings, signage, or signals (1963 Oregon Law, Chapter 118).

The "Pacific Wonderland" license plates were discontinued in 1964. In 1965 the Legislative Assembly passed legislation affecting driver responsibilities. The 'implied consent' legislation presumed the consent of all Oregon licensed drivers to sobriety testing. Failure to perform the test became sufficient grounds for license suspension (1965 Oregon Law, Chapter 574). A motorcycle operator's permit was established for the first time (1965 Oregon Law, Chapter 547) and the truck speed limit was increased to 50 mph (1965 Oregon Law, Chapter 415). Lastly, turn signals became required for motorists (mechanical or hand signal) as well as appropriate audible signals to effectively warn pedestrians (1965 Oregon Law, Chapter 104).

Interstate 5 opened in 1966 with four traffic lanes from Portland to the California border. Later that year, the Astoria Bridge opened for traffic and by doing so closed the last major water gap on US 101 from Mexico to Canada. The Astoria Bridge cost 24 million dollars and spans 4 miles.

The Department of Motor Vehicles computerized its records in 1967 and the gasoline tax was raised to 7¢ a gallon (1967 Oregon Law, Chapter 463).

## **Agency History - 1969-present**

In 1969 the Department of Motor Vehicles, State Highway Department including State Parks, the State Board of Aeronautics, State Ports Commission, and the newly created Mass Transit Division all came together to form the Oregon Department of Transportation (1969 Oregon Law, Chapter 599).

1970 marked some significant service changes by the new Department of Transportation. The first Spanish language driver manual and the first motorcycle driver manual were published. The first female driver examiners started work that year as well. A litter theme license plate debuted in 1970, reflecting the focus of then Governor Tom McCall.

By 1971 emission standards for aircraft were established (1971 Oregon Law, Chapter 452). 1971 was also the first year a driver's license had a photograph depicting the license holder.

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The change was made to deter the unlawful duplication of Oregon driver's licenses then prevalent.

The first increase in the drivers' license fees since 1922 occurred in 1973 with fees doubling from \$1 to \$2 (1973 Oregon Law, Chapters 724 and 156). That year the State Highway Commission became the Oregon Transportation Commission with decision and policy-making authority and increased the number of commission members to five. The Legislative Assembly reorganized the administration of the Department of Transportation placing each division under the direction on an administrative head appointed by the Director of the Department of Transportation and requiring confirmation by the Oregon Transportation Commission (1973 Oregon Law, Chapter 249).

The Ports Division was moved in 1975 from ODOT to the Department of Economic Development by the Legislative Assembly (1975 Oregon Law, Chapter 371).

In 1976 the Mt. Hood Freeway Plan was withdrawn after heavy public opposition. ODOT also paired up with the Oregon State Police to provide motorists with a recorded phone message system to inform motorists of current road conditions.

A dealer investigation unit was created in 1977 under the Division of Motor Vehicles due to the dubious practices employed by some Oregon used car dealers. 1977 was also the year that construction began on the I-205 Interstate Bridge in Portland (now the Glen Jackson bridge).

The State Parks Department was removed from the Highway Division in 1979 and formally made it its own unit within ODOT.

The eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980 kept the Highway Division busy with ash removal for many months. 1980 was also the year that voters removed State Parks and State Police funding from the Highway Fund.

The 1981 Legislative Assembly focused on motor vehicle safety. That year laws providing for motorcycle education class funding and making driving under the influence of alcohol (DUII) a criminal act were passed (1981 Oregon Law, Chapters 473 and 803). The 1983 Legislative Assembly furthered the regulation of DUII when they reduced the blood alcohol level for legal intoxication from .10 to .08 percent.

In 1983 the state's tourism promotion program was formally merged with other economic development efforts in the creation of the Tourism Division of the Oregon Economic Development Department (1983 Oregon Law, Chapter 324). This action removed tourism concerns from ODOT. 1983 also brought a reworking of the implied consent law to include additional sobriety tests and the inability to gain consent from an unconscious person (1983 Oregon Law, Chapter 822). 1983 was also the year mandatory child restraints are passed into law for all children weighing less than 40 pounds (1983 Oregon Law, Chapter 64).

New/non-traditional transportation forms were addressed by the 1985 Legislative Assembly. Ultra-light aircraft registration was established (1985 Oregon Law, Chapter 346), and the use of railroad crossings by light rail (1985 Oregon Law, Chapter 678) were both addressed. In

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addition, the Legislative Assembly transferred the responsibility for regulating rail safety from the Public Utility Commission to the Oregon Department of Transportation. Initially, Rail Safety was housed in ODOT's Transportation Development Branch.

Changes to the appearance of our skies and our communities occurred in 1987. ODOT's Aeronautics Division was placed under the realm of the Oregon Transportation Commission (1987 Oregon Law, Chapter 105). 1987 was also the year the Highway Division was authorized to grant permits for community identification signs in Oregon (1987 Oregon Law, Chapter 631). Limousines were defined under statute and thus exempted from motor carrier status (1987 Oregon Law, Chapter 111). The Board of Pilot Commissioners was removed from the Department of Commerce and placed under the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The Legislative Assembly had a busy year for transportation issues in 1989. The use of seatbelts (Chapter 1074) and the definition of pilots (Chapter 102) were both approved that year. 1989 also marked the year that the money to train young drivers was shifted from the Division of Motor Vehicles to the Education Department (1989 Oregon Law, Chapter 100).

In 1991 the Legislative Assembly made a declaration about the importance of Highway 101 and called for a comprehensive management approach to the highway (1991 Oregon Law, Chapter 235).

1991 also marked the first mention of alternative fuels in Oregon statute as mass transit districts were instructed to use alternative fuels and an energy tax credit was established for fleet vehicles (1991 Oregon Law, Chapters 711 and 730). Responsibility for traffic safety is placed under ODOT with the establishing of the Transportation Safety Division using the Traffic Safety Commission as its core (1991 Oregon Law, Chapter 453).

1993 was the year State Highway 66 between Altamont and Ashland was declared a scenic highway (1993 Oregon Law, Chapter 306). The Oregon Trail commemorative license plate was also introduced in 1993 (1993 Oregon Law, Chapter 741) and the use of vehicle accident records for commercial purposes became a Class C misdemeanor (1993 Oregon Law, Chapter 37).

The regulation of seaplanes began in 1995. Seaplanes were now considered boats when on state waters and thus subject to Oregon boating regulations (1995 Oregon Law, Chapter 655). Speeding and reckless endangerment of highway workers in highway work zones became an offense (1995 Oregon Law, Chapter 253). Toll roads legislation was also modified in Chapter 668 to provide for private investment in road projects. Motor Carrier registrations became staggered for renewal dates (Chapter 39) and the regulation of railroads and motor carriers is moved from the Public Utilities Commission to the Oregon Department of Transportation (Chapter 733).

The issue of toll roads arose again (Chapter 390) due to an unnamed Portland area project that was to be within the urban growth boundary. The salmon license plates were introduced (1997 Oregon Law, Chapter 672). Definition and registration of street rods was added to Oregon Law

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(Chapter 402). State policy was established to encourage telecommuting to reduce the traffic congestion and its effects on Oregon (Chapter 311).

On November 1, 1998 the Oregon Department of Transportation established the Rail Division.

Oregon transportation law in 1999 underwent a number of changes. The year marked the establishment of the Oregon Department of Aviation (Chapter 935) and the creation of a Disaster Relief Account for the recovery of Highways (Chapter 1060). As a means of promoting safer highways, safety corridors were established and photo radar use was defined (Chapter 1071). A drug and alcohol testing program was also established per Federal law for all motor carriers in Oregon (Chapter 1099).

The 1999 Legislative Assembly also addressed the transportation infrastructure needs. A road modernization program was established and funded by road tolls (Chapter 1072). Individual minor aged motorist are now required to provide proof of enrollment in school when seeking a drivers' license (Chapter 789) and drivers' license renewals were increased to eight-year intervals (Chapter 91).

The 2001 Legislative Assembly passed HB 2142 creating the Oregon Transportation Investment Act which provided 500 million dollars for state highway construction, renovation, and modernization projects. The Legislative Assembly created the Freight Advisory Committee to advise the Director of Transportation and the Oregon Transportation Commission on issues, policy, and procedure impacting multimodal freight mobility in Oregon (2001 Oregon Law, Chapter 240). In addition, ODOT is given the ability to enter into agreements with Native Nations to administer monies generated by use fuel tax (2001 Oregon Law, Chapter 305). ODOT is no longer allowed to establish pedestrian trails and bridle paths connecting streets, roads, and parks with the Pacific Ocean (2001 Oregon Law, Chapter 388). The Legislative Assembly mandated that ODOT provide State Highway funds in "reasonable" amounts to provide for footpaths and bike trails including curb cuts and ramps on state highway projects (2001 Oregon Law, Chapter 389). Maritime pilotage was amended to include assistance to vessels approaching and departing pilotage grounds and the communications associated with pilotage (Chapter 403). The Legislative Assembly directs ODOT to develop innovative financing to replace Oregon's reliance upon gas tax revenue through the Road User Fee Task Force (O.L. 2001 ch.862).

The Oregon Transportation Investment Act III of 2003 passed the Legislative Assembly granting ODOT 2.5 billion dollars in bond issuance/sales to fund highway and bridge construction, repair, improvement, and modernization projects. The Oregon Innovative Partnership Program is created to facilitate public- private partnership transportation projects in Oregon (O.L. 2003 ch. 790). The State Transportation Enterprise Funds is established as a separate and distinct account not impacted by the General Fund account. Specific, continuously approved funds are placed into the fund to promote innovative partnerships and projects. In addition, ODOT gains the ability to request from the State Treasury the issuance of bonds to support projects which are part of the Oregon Innovative Partnership Program.

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The Legislative Assembly established the Freight Advisory Committee in 2007 (O.L. 2007 ch. 366). Committee members are appointed by the director of ODOT and advise agency management on issues including development and implementation of policies and programs impacting intermodal freight mobility in Oregon and its impact upon ODOT operational plans including the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan. The Oregon Maritime Pilots Board moved from the Oregon Department of Transportation to the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

## **Chronology**

1849 Territorial Legislature establishes a system governing pilotage on the Columbia and Willamette rivers.

1905 Oregon's Secretary of State begins registering vehicles. A one-time fee of \$3 was charged with fees collected and certificates issued by the secretary of state. All revenue was placed in the General Fund and dedicated to road building.

1907 Legislative Assembly creates the Railroad Commission. 1911 Annual renewals of motor vehicle licenses begin. Chauffeur registration law becomes effective.

1913 State Highway Department created by the Legislative Assembly. Oregon Highway Commission established.

1916 Columbia River Highway dedicated.

1917 Legislative Assembly shifts road-building responsibilities from the counties to the state.

1919 Oregon enacts the nation's first gasoline tax.

1922 Highway Department establishes a Maintenance Division.

1947 The Legislative Assembly authorizes the construction of the Highway Building.

1956 The Department of Motor Vehicles established as a separate government branch. Duties include motor vehicle registration, driver licensing, and collection of the gas tax.

1965 Motorcycle endorsement program initiated. Implied consent law passed by Legislative Assembly.

1971 Environmental Unit established to prepare Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments for projects using federal funds.

1973 The State Highway Commission renamed the Oregon Transportation Commission.

1980 State Parks and State Police expenditures were removed from the Highway Fund.

1985 Oregon Vehicle Code created.

1990 The duties, functions, and powers of the Oregon Department of Transportation related to parks and recreation are assumed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

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1992 The Oregon Transportation Commission approves a plan to restructure six divisions into a single agency. The Oregon Traffic Safety Commission becomes part of ODOT as the Traffic Safety Section.

1993 The Legislative Assembly approves the restructuring of ODOT.

1995 The duties, functions, and powers for the regulation and enforcement of motor carriers and railroads transferred from the Public Utility Commission to the Oregon Department of Transportation. ODOT solidifies its Ethics oversight by creating the Safe Haven program.

1999 Legislative Assembly passes legislation creating the Oregon Department of Aviation using the Oregon Department of Transportation's Aeronautics Division.

2001 Legislative Assembly approves the Oregon Transportation Investment Act setting aside 500 million in funding for state highway construction, renovation, and modernization projects. The Legislative Assembly creates the Freight Advisory Committee to advise the Director of Transportation and the Oregon Transportation Commission on issues, policy, and procedure impacting multimodal freight mobility in Oregon. The Road User Fee Task Force is created to develop alternatives to Oregon's gas tax.

2003 The Oregon Innovative Partnership Program is created to facilitate public-private partnership transportation projects.

2007 Board of Maritime pilots removed to Public Utility Commission.

## **Legal and Bibliographic Information**

Legal (Statutes and Administrative Rules)

ORS 184 Administrative Services and Transportation Departments

ORS 802 Administrative Provisions

ORS 814 Pedestrians, Passengers, Livestock, Motorcycles, Mopeds, Bicycles, Motorized Wheelchairs

ORS 823 Carrier Regulation Generally

ORS 824 Railroads

[OAR 731 Department of Transportation](#)

[OAR 732 Department of Transportation, Public Transit Division](#)

[OAR 734 Department of Transportation, Transportation Operations](#)

[OAR 735 Department of Transportation, Driver and Motor Vehicle Services](#)

[OAR 737 Department of Transportation, Transportation Safety Section](#)

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[OAR 740 Department of Transportation, Motor Carrier Transportation Branch](#)

[OAR 741 Department of Transportation, Rail Section](#)

[OAR 856 Department of Transportation, Board of Maritime Pilots](#)

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