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**TO:** Crook County Board of Commissioners

**FROM:** John Eisler, Community Development Director

**DATE:** September 25, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Ordinance 354 – 2025 Transportation System Plan

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Before the Board is the culmination of nearly two years of efforts from the County to update its Transportation System Plan (TSP). The operative documents are incorporated into Ordinance 354 via Attachment A.

## **I. Purpose**

This memo provides a summary of the main points and key findings of the Draft 2025 TSP and its associated appendices. The purpose is to equip the Board with a concise overview of the plan's rationale, proposed solutions, and implementation strategy as you consider the ordinance for its official adoption.

It is important to note that the development and adoption of this TSP is a requirement for Crook County under Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 660-012, the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR). The TPR mandates that local governments plan for a 20-year transportation system that is integrated with their comprehensive land use plan. This includes providing a safe, convenient, and economic transportation system for all modes of travel—including motor vehicles, public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians—and ensuring the plan is consistent with state and regional transportation policies.

## **II. Background**

The County last updated its TSP in 2017. The TSP is designed to be a twenty-year planning document, but with the recent growth and future projections, along with the need to establish a dependable funding mechanism for transportation capital projects, the County decided an updated TSP was necessary.

To develop this TSP, the County has undergone extensive consultation and outreach. A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) comprising stakeholders and experts, including representatives from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) was established to meet and provide feedback on the development of the TSP. Multiple open houses

and presentations have been held for the public. Surveys have been received regarding the preferred solutions in the 2025 TSP draft. The Planning Commission held a work session and separate hearing before making the recommendation to move forward with the 2025 TSP.

### **III. Key Issues and Needs Identified**

The TSP analysis identified several critical transportation deficiencies that need to be addressed to ensure the safety and mobility of residents over the next 20 years.

#### **1. Traffic Operations & Congestion:**

- **Future Failures:** Under a high-growth scenario for the 2045 horizon year, five of the six key intersections studied are projected to fail, exceeding their capacity and state mobility targets.
- **Current Issues:** The intersection of SW Powell Butte Highway and OR 126 already exceeds its mobility target, experiencing significant congestion.
- **Juniper Canyon:** With only one primary access road (SE Juniper Canyon Road), the growing community faces significant congestion at its intersection with OR 380, a problem projected to worsen in the years ahead.

#### **2. Safety Concerns:**

- **Crash Data:** Between 2017 and 2021, there were 732 crashes in the unincorporated county, resulting in 17 fatalities and 54 serious injuries. Fixed-object and rear-end crashes are most common, with speeding and inattention as the top contributing factors.
- **High-Crash Locations:** The safety analysis flagged five intersections as exceeding the critical crash rate. Several other intersections and road segments were also identified as having safety concerns that require intervention.

#### **3. Emergency Access & Evacuation:**

- **Juniper Canyon:** Other than the Powell Butte Highway/OR 126 intersection, the most pressing issue raised by the community is the lack of a secondary access route for Juniper Canyon. Residents are concerned about emergency vehicle access during a road blockage and the ability to evacuate during a wildfire or other natural disaster.

#### **4. Multimodal Deficiencies:**

- **Pedestrians:** There are currently no sidewalks in unincorporated Crook County, forcing pedestrians to walk on roadway shoulders, if available. This is a particular concern in community hubs like Powell Butte.

- **Bicycles:** While popular for recreation, key cycling routes often lack paved shoulders, creating an uncomfortable and high-stress environment for cyclists sharing the road with high-speed traffic. The existing network is fragmented.

#### IV. Summary of Major Preferred Solutions

To address these needs, the TSP recommends several high-priority projects:

##### **1. OR 126 / SW Powell Butte Highway Intersection (Project R-1A):**

The preferred solution is to construct a single-lane roundabout. This will improve safety by reducing conflict points and calming traffic speeds, while also addressing current and near-term congestion. The design will maintain critical access to the Powell Butte post office.

##### **2. Juniper Canyon Access (Projects JC-1 & JC-2):**

Recognizing the multifaceted needs, the plan proposes a two-pronged approach:

- **JC-1 (W01A Alignment):** A new paved road connecting Davis Loop to OR 27. This route addresses daily traffic congestion and provides an alternate route for emergency services and residents if Juniper Canyon Road is closed.
- **JC-2:** A new gravel emergency access route connecting SE Simpson Road to OR 380. This route is located further south to better serve the community's desire for an emergency evacuation option.

##### **3. OR 126 Corridor Improvements (Projects R-2A & R-3A):**

To manage future growth along this critical corridor, in addition to the Powell Butte Highway/OR 126 roundabout, the plan recommends:

- A single lane roundabout at SW Williams Road/OR 126 to provide traffic calming and improve safety performance for all modes of travel.
- Widening OR 126 near SW Parrish Lane to include a center two-way left-turn lane.

#### V. Implementation and Funding

This is the most critical challenge. The TSP identifies approximately \$80 million in needed projects.

- **Funding Gap:** The Crook County Road Fund is fully allocated to operations and maintenance and is already strained. There is no existing local funding source for new capital projects identified in this plan.
- **Strategy:** Implementation will rely almost entirely on securing external funding through a combination of federal/state grants and partnerships with

ODOT. The adoption of this TSP is a prerequisite for applying for nearly all of these competitive grant programs.

- **Local Match:** Most grants will require a local match (typically 10-20%). To meet this requirement, the County will need to explore new local funding options, such as System Development Charges (SDCs) or a Local Improvement District (LID) for specific projects.

## **VI. Ordinance 354 - 2025 TSP**

The 2025 TSP will become part of the County's Comprehensive Plan, replacing the 2017 TSP. As such, the 2025 TSP is a legislative amendment to be passed via ordinance, which requires at least two public hearings by the Board of Commissioners at least fourteen days apart. Each hearing is heard *de novo*, with any member of the public permitted to provide comment.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously to pass the 2025 TSP draft for the Board's consideration and to consider their comments. The Planning Commission's comments from the September 24<sup>th</sup> hearing include:

- A concurrence that the Powell Butte Highway/OR 126 intersection and alternative Juniper Access are the primary planning concerns.
- As projects enter the design phase, access for emergency services and the mobility of freight and ranchers should remain top priorities.
- Until some of these projects can be constructed, a greater law enforcement presence should be considered.
- The Board should continue to receive and consider public input as it finalizes the 2025 TSP.

## **VII. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The 2025 TSP Update provides a data-driven, community-vetted roadmap for improving Crook County's transportation system over the next 20 years. It addresses critical existing and future needs related to safety, congestion, and access. Adopting this plan is the essential next step that will position the County to pursue grant funding and develop the dedicated revenue sources necessary to turn these proposed projects into reality.

It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners approve the ordinance to formally adopt the 2025 Crook County Transportation System Plan.

Please let me know if you have any questions.