Eugene Public Works
Engineering

2/4/2020

Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair
Representative Caddy McKeown, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SUPPORT for HB 4103-3 Allowing ODOT to Delegate Authority for Settings Speeds

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 4103-3, which would allow ODOT to delegate authority for setting speeds to local jurisdictions.

Eugene is a Vision Zero City with the goal of eliminating deaths and life changing injuries on our transportation system by 2035.

The tenets of Vision Zero and safe systems approaches to transportation safety are to design our streets so that the outcomes of people making mistakes is less severe, that we design streets and set speed limits with the trauma a human body can withstand in mind, we use data to inform our decision making and agency transportation professionals are accountable for managing their transportation systems to meet desired safety outcomes.

We know that speed is the most critical factor in whether a crash occurs and how severe the outcomes of a crash are. People walking, biking and driving are more likely to be killed or experience life-changing injuries on 35 mph streets than any other speed in Eugene.

The graphic below illustrates how small differences in speed exponentially increase the chance of death and life changing injuries for vulnerable users such as people walking, biking or using a mobility device.

Source: Tefft, Brian C. Impact speed and a pedestrian's risk of severe injury or death. Accident Analysis & Prevention. 50. 2013

The current system (85th percentile centric) for determining speeds within urban areas is outdated, with the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommending, "The safe system approach to setting speed limits in urban areas is an improvement over conventional approaches because it considers the vulnerability of all road users."

The City of Eugene has been enthusiastically collaborating with ODOT and other local governments as part of a speed zone roundtable to update the speed setting methodology in the OARs to a safe systems approach informed by best practices and national research currently underway by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP). ODOT is currently in the rulemaking process to make changes recommended by the speed zone roundtable.

As part of this collaboration we have been working to establish a process by which ODOT can delegate authority to qualified local agencies to set speeds in their jurisdictions through a certification process. HB 4103-3 is the first step in establishing authority for this process and allowing qualified local jurisdictions, under ODOT's oversight, to apply the statewide safe systems framework currently being developed to manage their transportation systems to meet safety and mobility goals.

HB 4103-3 is also in alignment with the 2016 Oregon Transportation Safety Action Plan Strategy 2.4.1 "Work with state, regional, tribal, county, and city agencies to implement best practices in setting design speeds and speed limits" and action 6.3.2 "Continue work between ODOT, cities, and counties to consider and revise, as appropriate, regulations and programs for establishing speed limits to achieve safety goals, improve balance among multimodal interests, and support community objectives".

HB 4103 has been amended to include Lane County as an agency to which ODOT can delegate speed authority to set speed limits. This is important in Eugene where we have neighborhoods with a mix of city and county streets as well as streets that change jurisdiction along their path.

In closing, again, Eugene thanks you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 4103-3 and asks that you provide a 'Do Pass' recommendation for this bill.

Sincerely,

submitted electronically

Matt Rodrigues, P.E.
Public Works Director
City of Eugene

High Crash Network

Source: ODOT crash data, 2007-2015