



## Press Release

**Date:** October 1, 2024  
**Subject:** Wasco County to Face Revenue Shortfall to Maintain and Manage a Safe County Road System According to AOC 2024 County Road Needs Study

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Last week, the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) presented its *2024 County Road Needs Study* to the Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation, forecasting a statewide annual revenue shortfall of 59% over the next five years, resulting in an additional \$834 million per year needed to maintain and manage the county road system in a safe and adequate condition. The report included data from Wasco County, as part of the Eastern region, noting the deficiencies in funding resources.

Counties partner with the state to support a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects Oregonians and the economy. However, Oregon counties, along with the Oregon Department of Transportation and other transportation agencies across the state, are facing structural funding challenges that impact core services, such as the maintenance of roads and bridges. Counties are responsible for the largest share of Oregon's public road system, with more than 32,000 miles and 4,000 bridges. Wasco County owns and maintains 660 road miles, 380 miles of which are gravel surfaces roads, and 65 bridges. This includes almost 100 miles that are in poor or fair condition, 8 structurally deficient bridges in poor condition, and 17 heavy-truck-weight restricted bridges.

Today, inflation, shrinking fuel consumption, and limited local tax bases, have required counties to defer needed safety improvements and routine maintenance work, resulting in a lower standard of quality and safety for the existing road system. In addition, over the last 30 years, federal partners have significantly reduced funding for Oregon's rural roads.

To bridge the gap, Wasco County depends on shared revenues from the long-standing 50-30-20 State Highway Fund distribution formula that supports Oregon's public road system. Funds are distributed 50% to the state, 30% to counties, and 20% to cities. This fund is crucial for safety improvements and maintaining critical infrastructure that all Oregonians depend on — roads, bridges, sidewalks, bike paths, traffic signals, and culverts.

“Without adequate funding we will continue to struggle keeping up with our basic road maintenance – chip sealing, paint striping, blading, snow removal, among other needs,” said Arthur Smith, Public Works Director.

Wasco County representatives will continue to share concerns, priorities, and ideas for solutions to help state legislators build a transportation funding package in 2025 that will support the needs of local communities.

Currently, Wasco County has many maintenance needs, including pavement preservation, bridge rehabilitation, gravel road grading, and many unmet projects such as the Five Mile-Steele Road repair, Tygh Valley-Wamic safety improvements, and the Three Mile intersection reconstruction to name just a few.

“Adequate funding for our county road department is critical to the well-being of all Oregonians. Our roads are essential infrastructure that support our farming and ranching community, enables commerce, facilitates travel, and supports our quality of life. Without sufficient funding, our roads will deteriorate. We must continue maintenance of our investment for the future of our communities and the economic vitality of our region,” stated Steve Kramer, Wasco County Commissioner.

To read the full 2024 study, and learn more about county road, bridge, and transportation priorities and funding, including Wasco County, visit [oregoncounties.org](https://www.oregoncounties.org).

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