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ODOT dealing with major budget shortfalls heading into 2020 and '21

by Tom Adams and KVAL.com Staff
Monday, August 10th 2020

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ODOT dealing with major budget shortfalls heading into 2020 and '21 (SBG)

LANE COUNTY, Ore. — While Oregon lawmakers are busy trying to balance the budget, transportation managers have their own set of money headaches, not only this year, but for the next four years.

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going to get pretty tight for ODOT.

The latest state revenue forecast did no favors for the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Between the effects of the pandemic and the hammer to the economy, ODOT is faced with a \$170-million revenue shortfall in 2020 and '21.

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That's just the start...

"We're predicting that over the course of the next several years we'll be down about a quarter of a billion dollars," said Travis Brouwer, the ODOT assistant Director for Revenue. "So that's a pretty substantial amount of money."

Brouwer explains COVID-19 travel restrictions emptied Oregon highways in the spring and it's only partially recovered. That affects gas tax revenue. Plus spring office closures at the Department of Motor Vehicles put a big hit on driver's license and motor vehicle fees.

"When people choose to not buy another vehicle because they don't have a job or maybe they are not driving as much, then that's less revenue coming in for the state highway fund."

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"Patching potholes, fixing guardrails out there during the winter, plowing snow," Brouwer said. "So we're going to have less money for things like that."

One positive point to take from the current budget dilemma is current construction projects. Angela Beers-Seydel tells us projects like the Beltline/N. Delta interchange is safe.

Future construction has a much cloudier future, made worse by the revenue losses now for ODOT.

Beers-Seydel says motorists need to be prepared for a lower level of service, at least for the short term.

Brouwer adds the best thing state lawmakers can do is make sure the Oregon DMV has enough money to effectively do its job.

The DMV is dealing with a backlog of 200,000 appointments of people requesting services. DMV revenue makes up one-third of the state highway fund.

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