



Testimony of Upstream Public Health to the
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation
In support of SJR 16
Heidi Guenin, Policy Manager – Transportation & Land Use

March 27th, 2015

Dear Chair Beyer and committee members,

Upstream Public Health supports SJR 16 to amend Oregon’s Constitution to allow for transportation investments that are cost effective, healthy, environmentally sustainable, and equitable. Upstream Public Health is a public health policy research, development, and advocacy organization, and we work to create the physical, social, and economic environments where all Oregonians can thrive.

The current Constitutional limitations on how motor vehicle revenue can be spent do not allow for enough flexibility to truly address the impacts of motor vehicles on the transportation system and on our communities. Our historic disproportionate investment in roads has resulted in communities designed more for moving vehicles than for making sure people have access to healthy, affordable, environmentally friendly transportation options. This is why Upstream supports amending the Constitution to allow for transit and active transportation investments that would reduce the “traffic burden of, or pollution from, motor vehicles on public roads.” These investments would have the added benefits of improving public health through increased physical activity, improved safety for active transportation users, and improved air quality.

In addition to the direct health impacts of transportation, transportation accounts for 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon. We have a responsibility to protect our future. In order to meet our statewide goals for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, we will need to invest in safe and efficient walking, bicycling, and transit options. Active transportation options alone are insufficient to meet Oregon’s climate goals when the true cost of operating a motor vehicle is not borne by each driver but also by the entire community. Under the current Constitutional limitation, tools to account for the full cost of driving a motor vehicle (like a carbon tax) are weakened by the fact that revenues must go back into the roadway. With this amendment, revenues could also be used for a range of healthier and more economically and environmentally sustainable of active transportation solutions – creating a system that makes no- or low-greenhouse gas emission transportation options competitive with driving a motor vehicle.

The current Constitutional restriction on motor vehicle-related revenues limits Oregon’s ability to create and maintain a 21st century transportation system that supports the health and well-being of communities across the state. Upstream supports SJR 16 as a necessary first step in creating the transportation system that Oregonians deserve.

Thank you for your time,

Heidi Guenin
Policy Manager, Transportation & Land Use