



PROTECTING YOUR  
RIGHT TO ROAM

26 March 2015

Senate Committee on Business and Transportation  
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As the state's pedestrian advocacy organization working to make walking a safe, convenient, and accessible transportation option for Oregonians across the state, Oregon Walks is excited to announce our strong support for SJR 16. Our organization strongly encourages the Senate's Business and Transportation committee to support this Constitutional amendment as a pragmatic, innovative opportunity for Oregon to once again demonstrate our leadership in enabling local jurisdictions to plan for livable communities by providing their constituents a wider variety of travel options.

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Currently, our state's transportation infrastructure is woefully underfunded and under built; from Portland to Pendleton, Ashland to Astoria, Oregonians are increasingly looking for a variety of transportation options to better suit their travel needs, and communities are facing difficult decisions with few funding mechanisms to support the necessary transit, sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities and road improvements to serve our changing economy and demography. Because of our state's strict, outdated limits on expenditure of gas tax revenue, local jurisdictions are often unable to invest in cheaper, cost-effective, equitable, and sustainable improvements that would better serve their constituents needs. Removing the constitutional limitation would allow a rural town to invest in simple bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure near their local high school, eliminating congestion and promoting healthy travel options at a fraction the cost and impact to the community as freeway widening, often the only option available to cash-strapped communities reliant on gas tax revenues for basic transportation investments. Forcing this "one-mode-fits-all" transportation policy on local jurisdictions leads to road investments that don't adequately serve community needs when simpler, healthier, cheaper investments would better support healthy, accessible and vibrant streetscapes across the state.

As advocates for social justice, Oregon Walks is also heartened to know that this proposed constitutional amendment would provide an important

opportunity for a much-needed discussion about how our state can build a transportation system that best fits the needs of an increasingly diverse, carless demographic of Oregonians. Low income communities, communities of color, elderly and young populations, all of which are dramatically increasing in size in our state, are often uninterested in or unable to afford investment in private automobiles; the lack of basic sidewalks, reliable transit and bicycle facilities are often a significant barrier to employment and education. Eliminating this constitutional restriction represents an opportunity to build a transportation system that better fits the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century Oregonians.

Passage of SJR 16 would also lead towards a widespread movement towards greater safety on our streets as well. Next month, our organization is partnering with the Bicycle Transportation Alliance to launch a campaign to encourage the city of Portland to adopt a “Vision Zero” policy to work towards improvements in our infrastructure that will eliminate any and all traffic deaths within the city. By prioritizing investment in safer streets, we can work to ensure that Oregon families will no longer have to suffer the unthinkable tragedy of losing a loved one to an utterly preventable and needless loss of life on our streets. To enact this groundbreaking vision in our communities, local jurisdictions will increasingly need more flexibility on how to better spend their allocated funding. SJR 16 would provide a path towards this desperately needed flexibility.

In short, SJR 16 allows the state an opportunity for a broader conversation about how to build a more robust, sustainable, socially just, and economically viable transportation to better fit the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century Oregonians. Oregon Walks is excited to support this legislation, and encourages a yes vote on SJR 16.

Aaron Brown  
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