

Date: April 20, 2021  
To: Co-Chairs McLain and Beyer, Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation  
From: Jon Henrichsen, Transportation Director/County Engineer  
Subject: HB 2342 (2021 Regular Session)

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Co-Chairs McLain and Beyer, Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

On behalf of Multnomah County we submit the following testimony in support of HB 2342 and the -3 amendments.

Multnomah County is responsible for nearly 300 road miles, 25 small bridges, 1000s of culverts and pedestrian ramps and 6 big (over 30,000 sq ft) bridges. The County's share of the State Highway Fund combined with our local gas tax is wholly insufficient to maintain our existing system of roads, bridges and related assets, and the buying power of our funding continues to decrease each year.

Multnomah County's big bridges are particularly expensive to maintain or replace when they reach the end of their service life (several are over 100 years old and still providing service to upwards of 35,000 vehicles a day). The ability to increase the local vehicle registration fee (VRF) was the first revenue source available to the County sufficient to allow us to significantly fund major projects such as the replacement of the Sellwood Bridge. It is an integral part of our funding plan for the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge (EQRB) project. By amending this bill to allow the County to keep our local VRF allowances in statute, HB2342 will preserve our ability to pay off the debt from constructing the new Sellwood Bridge and to design and construct the EQRB project which is vital to the rescue and recovery plans for Multnomah County, the City of Portland, and the entire Metro region after a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.

In the 2017 Session, the State Legislature passed the largest transportation funding package in Oregon's history, House Bill 2017 "Keep Oregon Moving," which allocated approximately \$1 billion in new revenue to counties over 10 years. The additional funding that came to Multnomah County as a result of that funding package, primarily raised through increased gas tax, only just provides enough revenue to keep up with the cost growth in our programs that maintain our roads and small bridges and other related assets. Over time, the increase in vehicle fuel efficiency will render the gas tax an unsustainable source of revenue to maintain our roads and bridges.

It is vital that a new revenue source is identified to replace gas taxes and to provide a stable and sufficient source of funds to Multnomah County and to all local agencies that will allow us to maintain our transportation systems as costs continue to increase.

Multnomah County supports beginning to move towards a more sustainable source of funding, such as the vehicle mile tax proposed by HB 2342.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of a sustainable State Highway Fund that supports

Oregon's shared multimodal transportation system and all communities thrive.

Thank you,

**Jon Henrichsen**

Transportation Director/County Engineer  
Department of Community Services