

Oral Testimony to Joint Special Subcommittee On Transportation Planning on January 6, 2024

My name is Brian Ettling, and I live in outer northeast Portland. For 25 years, I worked as a seasonal park ranger at Crater Lake National Park, Oregon, one of America's most scenic treasures. Crater Lake is not close to any major cities or industrial areas, so it prides itself as having some of the cleanest air in the U.S.

Sadly, I saw climate change at Crater Lake with a diminishing annual snowpack and more intense wildfire seasons. The smoke from the wildfires was hazardous to breathe at times and forced visitors with health issues to cancel their vacations. Scientists tell us that the largest source of climate change pollution in the U.S. and Oregon now is transportation caused by vehicle tailpipe emissions from burning gasoline and diesel. Air pollution from burning these fuels kills around 9 million people a year globally and negatively impacts the health of millions of Americans and tens of thousands of Oregonians.

In 2017, I quit my Crater Lake ranger job to become a climate change organizer to reduce that threat and deadly air pollution, the leading cause is transportation. Thus, today I urge you to design our transportation system to optimize safety, climate, maintenance, as well as reducing congestion. We should use a variety of funding sources to replace the gas tax as that decreases due to greater fuel efficiency and electrification.

Let's shift from fuel tax to multiple other mechanisms, such as

- Congestion pricing
- VMT or Vehicle Miles Traveled tax graded for vehicle efficiency
- Road user fees, such as local tolling projects.
- EV purchase or registration fees
- Vehicle weight tax
- Cordon charges
- Parking charges
- Tire fees.

If we don't expand highways, we have enough funds to build a better transportation system. As a state, we also need to be investing more in light rail, bus, and passenger rail transportation to assist Oregonians who can't drive, don't like to drive – like me, and shouldn't be driving – like me (FYI: I drive slow so don't drive behind me after we leave this hearing today. I tend to cause my own traffic congestion. I drive a green Honda Civic). Anyway, we need to invest, not just in roads, but in other multimodal options to reduce vehicle congestion and deadly pollution.

I love taking Tri-Met (MAX and buses) in Portland instead of driving and taking Amtrak to cities outside of Portland. If you saw my driving, you would agree we should be investing more in that and not roads. Thank you for your time!