

Oregon Joint Committee on Transportation
jct.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

June 4, 2024

RE: Listening Session #1—Written testimony

Dear members of the Oregon Legislature Joint Committee on Transportation:

I attended the first Listening Session on Transportation, held in Portland. While I signed up to give verbal testimony, time ran out and I was unable to provide testimony at the event. I am a Team Member for 350PDX Policy Team, and we thank you for holding these listening sessions around the state.

We urge you to consider climate/reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in developing the Transportation legislative package for the 2025 legislative session. In 2021, transportation contributed 35% of Oregon's GHG emissions.

"Oregon state agencies and local governments are working together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050." www.oregontransportationemissions.com

While Oregon has developed strategies to meet this goal, we are not on track to meet the goal with current efforts.

We also urge the legislature to consider equity for our most vulnerable residents, providing alternatives to driving for safe and affordable transportation options. Examples include: improving public transit, increased funding for bicycle lanes, Safe Routes to School, sidewalks and safe street crossings.

Listening to the presentation by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) staff reinforced the need to consider modifying existing and establishing other funding mechanisms to support ODOT. The gas tax provides a smaller portion of needed funding, as vehicles become more fuel-efficient and labor/ construction costs rise. **Indexing gas tax for inflation would be one mechanism.** We do have concerns that this would be a regressive tax for low-income Oregonians.

Electrification of vehicles is needed to reduce GHG emissions, and drivers of electric vehicles (including me) should also pay for road infrastructure. **VMT fees**—vehicle miles traveled—seems reasonable, but uncertain how these fees would be collected and vehicle miles would be verified. Apparently, there is an OReGo program where electric vehicle owners pay an annual fee or a 19 cents/mile. As there are currently weight-mile taxes on heavy trucks, these might be expanded to include electric vehicles.

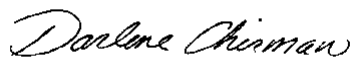
Road congestion should be addressed by **programs to reduce overall Vehicle Miles Traveled**, rather than expanded lanes for motor vehicles. ODOT has current programs for active transportation, such as bike lanes, sidewalks, safe street crossings, and Safe Routes to School. There is insufficient funding for these grant programs currently to meet the requests, and increased funding for these programs would be cost-effective compared to highway widening. It is also important to **expand transportation alternatives, such as public transit**, electric buses, and trains, which reduce GHG emissions and provide equitable and affordable transportation to low-income residents that may not own cars. The new transportation legislation should include increased service frequency for all public transit, expanded rapid bus transit routes, and reliable rail services between urban areas. Public transit

options provide multiple benefits including reducing climate impact, reducing road congestion, improving air quality and reducing health impacts such as asthma, and equitable transportation access.

Portland Department of Transportation has completed two pilot projects of **Transportation Wallet: Access for All** (<https://www.portland.gov/transportation/wallet>). These Transportation Wallet passes are provided to low-income residents in Portland. An individual can opt for an unlimited public transit pass, or a more limited transit pass plus funding that can be used for the bike-share program “Biketown,” e-scooters, or ride-share. The program is proposed for expansion with funding from the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF). **A similar statewide program could be developed by ODOT**, likely as a grant program to communities that have public transit. Portland has a first electric car-share program at a low-income housing facility (Cedar Commons, Central City Concern). Use of a car-share program could be included in the Transportation Wallet package or could be used in parts of the state where public transit is not available.

We appreciate that it is complicated to create a plan that provides a transportation system for the State of Oregon, offers affordable transportation options for our vulnerable residents, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, ensures seismic upgrades for bridges, and secures sufficient funding. We urge you to develop a Transportation Package for the 2025 Legislative Session that will help address these goals.

Sincerely,



Darlene Chirman
350PDX Climate Justice Policy Team
Team Member

7017 SE Martins Street
Portland, OR 97206