

I was unable to attend the transportation package listening session in Medford yesterday to give testimony. Thank you for accepting this written comment on what I hope to see for the future of transportation in the state—for how we make sure we all get where we need to go here in Oregon.

### **Let's create funding mechanisms that also improve safety**

I have been someone who primarily walks, bikes, or rides the bus, because these have always been the more affordable options, and because they don't contribute to air or climate pollution. In recent years, however, as car sizes have increased and speeding has become more routine, I have experienced many more close calls while walking or biking, no matter how safe, aware, and law-abiding I try to be myself. Trucks are running through crosswalks and whipping around corners without looking and they're twice the height they were just a few years ago. I feel decidedly less safe. This is especially true because I know what it's like to have nearly died from someone else's reckless driving: over a decade ago, I was hit and thrown to the ground by a regular sized vehicle that ran a red light. It sent me to the hospital for a week. I can only imagine what might happen with one of the larger vehicles now on our roadways.

**Given this, I think one solution that solves both the need for greater safety and the need to provide a new revenue source for transportation projects is to put in place taxes or fees on larger vehicles.** These heavy, massive trucks take up extra space on our streets and wear down the roads even faster, and most of these vehicles are driven for vanity purposes; the beds are often the same size or smaller than on older pickups. My safety, the longevity of our roads, and the quality of the air we all breathe should not suffer because someone wants to look fancy or macho, in an oversized truck or oversized luxury SUV. **Please find a mechanism that discourages further widespread use of such vehicles and forces these users to pay for the stress they put on our communities.**

### **Let's invest in a truly statewide transit system**

Here is what I hope to see prioritized in investments made by the 2025 transportation package:

**1. I love the POINT bus system, and would like to see more routes and greater frequency,** to help those of us who are in small towns around the state get where we need to go when we do not have car access.

**2. I would especially like to see transit options that connect Medford to the Amtrak Cascades line in Eugene.** Right now, the Greyhound/Flix bus has become overcrowded and unreliable, and its schedule is not synced with the train. We are cut out of access to the rest of the state because of this. Timed bus connections to Amtrak would allow Southern OR residents to have truly regional connectivity and the ability to get not only to most places in Oregon but much of Washington as well. (Some might mention that one can fly to Portland or Seattle from Medford, but we know this is not good for our climate goals, and right now there is not bus service to MFR at a time that sync with most PDX and SEA flights, anyhow, which are already packed full as it is).

Local transit agencies are facing incredible staffing challenges, and right now everyone is forced to do their own recruitment. I think there could be great savings and also much benefit to the **state assisting in some centralized recruitment and training of bus drivers for local transit agencies.**

**3. Similarly, every small agency has to pay to run their own app and scheduling system, many of which do not appear on tools like Google Maps, which make it difficult to take transit. It is especially difficult for out-of-town visitors. Adoption of a statewide transit app and pass would make it more convenient and simpler for all to use transit.** We have economic opportunities through tourist dollars spent by long distance hikers and others on the Oregon

Coast Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, and other long routes who would benefit from all the little transit agencies being simplified in such ways. Similarly, congestion in towns like Ashland during the tourist season could be reduced if we made it easier for visitors to use transit. King and Pierce counties in Washington have done an excellent job of making fares less confusing by allowing use of the ORCA card on multiple systems. (And if we were to pick an app, I would say our local transit agency, RVTD, has made an excellent choice and their app would be a good one to use.)

**4. High speed rail would be fantastic to see, but keep funding bus access.**

Bus lines are more flexible; they can be more easily re-routed when ride patterns change or when a major disaster strikes. We should still be investing in planning and making high speed rail possible to replace trips currently made by car and air. But we should not do so at the expense of maintaining and expanding current bus routes.

My suggestions here are all focused on transit because I think it is incredibly important that we get people out of their cars, and while walking and biking are good solutions for covering short distances, transit is what helps people really live their lives to the fullest without needing to have full-time access to a vehicle.

**Getting more people to use transit—if not for all, at least more of their regular trips—achieves so many goals in one go:** It reduces traffic congestion and air pollution in one fell swoop. It reduces wildfire risk by limiting the number of cars on our roads during hot, dry weather. It provides a necessary service for those with disabilities who cannot drive, and an affordable means to get to the grocery store or to work for those who cannot always afford a vehicle. It fills the gap for those who usually walk or bike but need a different option.

For those reasons and more, I hope that transit remains a priority for spending in the 2025 transportation package, with a focus on improving transit systems and connections between Southern OR and other rural communities and the rest of the state.

Thank you for your time and your work on these issues.

Sincerely,  
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