

Good evening, esteemed Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation members.

My name is Wesley Heredia, and I am the Program Manager for Vamonos Outside. Our work in Central Oregon focuses on advancing an inclusive outdoor culture by providing recreational opportunities tailored for Latine and BIPOC communities. We aim to use the outdoors as a transformative tool for personal growth, impacting individuals and families positively.

We emphasize the importance of well-designed pathways and street safety to support this mission, ensuring safe and accessible transportation routes to and from outdoor activities. This holistic approach helps foster a welcoming environment and enhances the overall engaging experience with nature.

I am here today to discuss the Oregon Community Paths program's urgent funding needs and highlight the critical importance of maintaining our regional trails, specifically the Lava Butte to Bend to La Pine Path in Central Oregon.

Oregon Community Paths Program Overview

The Oregon Community Paths program is instrumental in creating and maintaining multi-use paths that significantly enhance access and safety for people walking and bicycling. This significant shortfall severely limits our ability to effectively meet our communities' needs.

Importance of Safe and Accessible Paths

The Oregon Community Paths program provides essential infrastructure that supports:

- **Safe Transportation Options:** Our multi-use paths offer safe places for individuals who are too young to drive or who cannot afford a car. For many, these paths represent the only viable means of transportation.
- **Low-Stress Travel:** Off-street paths reduce the stress associated with travel, providing a safer and more pleasant experience for people walking and biking within and between Central Oregon communities.

On a similar note

An important regional trail project in our area is the Lava Butte to Bend to La Pine Path in Central Oregon. This trail is a vital component of our regional infrastructure because:

- **Enhanced Connectivity:** It connects several communities, facilitating easier access to essential services and fostering economic and social interactions.
- **Promoting Active Transportation:** By offering a dedicated space for walking and biking, this path encourages healthier lifestyles and reduces reliance on motor vehicles.
- **Ongoing Maintenance Needs:** To ensure the continued safety and usability of this trail, ongoing maintenance is essential. Adequate funding will help us preserve its condition and functionality for all users.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony

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