

Dear committee members,

My name is Heidi Wambaugh and I live in central Oregon in Bend. I prefer to get around via active transportation networks, whether by cycling, walking, or taking public transit. I prefer these means as they are more cost effective and allow me to save for other things, healthier for myself and the climate, and less stressful than driving a car, whether it be in busy traffic or on icy roads in the winter. I am an occupational therapist and in my work in the hospital setting, I have worked with numerous patients who have sustained serious injuries from motor vehicle accidents; therefore, it is difficult for me to drive without thinking about the serious risks involved so I prefer that driving not be part of my daily routine.

I have been fortunate to live near a network of bicycle paths that I could take to safely reach my job at the hospital, but often needed to rely on a car to run other errands as there were not safe bike networks to reach these areas. However, there are many in our community that do not live or work in areas with access to safe routes to reach school, work, or run their errands via bike or walking.

In addition, during the winter or during summer days when the air quality was too hazardous from wildfire smoke to safely bike, it was necessary for me to drive to the hospital to commute. I typically worked longer ten hour days and many weekend days, and public transit in Bend did not provide adequate coverage during these times. I know I am not the only one with working hours outside of a typical Mon-Fri 8am-5pm work schedule who are unable to utilize our public transit. For me, I am in a position of privilege in which I can afford car ownership so have access when I need to use it. However, many in my community have been deeply impacted by rising costs of housing and inflation of groceries and other basic items. In addition, many people are employed in lower wage service industry jobs, often also working evenings or weekends as well when public transit is not available. For many members of my community, the cost of car ownership impedes their ability to save for other things, like college or a home, and for many, car ownership is an expense simply out of reach. As an occupational therapist, I also understand that there are many people in my community who are unable to drive due to disabilities as well. I know these issues are not specific to my community of Bend and impact communities all over Oregon.

Given this, I would like more of the budget in the 2025 transportation package invested in expanding safe active transportation networks. We can invest more in safe cycling and walking infrastructure and specifically invest in programs like Safe Routes to Schools and Oregon Community Paths that work to improve access to these in our communities. I would also like to see investments in our public transit system. This includes expanding coverage on evenings and weekends and expanding route coverage and frequency to better connect areas of our community and make public transit more convenient to use.

I firmly believe investing more in active transportation networks that promote cycling, walking, rolling, public transit, and reducing car dependency have far reaching benefits to our communities. First, we can significantly reduce government costs by reducing road maintenance, expansion projects, parking infrastructure, and costs associated with vehicle crashes to name just a few. This can help stretch our transportation budget much further. In addition, we can reduce healthcare costs by reducing air pollution, vehicle car crashes, and promoting more physical activity in our communities. This also addresses our climate-related goals by reducing vehicle emissions and air pollution for instance. I also think promoting active transportation networks ultimately fosters a greater sense of community. I know I personally

interact a lot more with my neighbors and other community members when I take a bus, walk, or cycle to my destination rather than use a car.

I would be happy to see increased funding for our transportation budget if funds are being utilized to support active transportation networks that bring positive impacts into my community. I specifically support funding that utilizes vehicle miles traveled though I think there are important caveats to ensure equity and provide the right incentives. I think it is important to adjust pricing for ranges of fuel economy and whether the vehicle is electric or not. It is also important to make some exceptions to reduce impact on lower income residents and/or those in rural communities where they do not have access to viable active transportation alternatives and often must commute longer distances into towns with employment opportunities. I also support funding options from luxury or new items, such as fees or taxes associated with new car sales or purchases. In addition, I also support increasing registration fees for larger vehicles. The only car I own is an old truck and am in support of paying more for my registration fees because it creates more emissions and causes more wear and tear to the road than other cars.

To reiterate, I hope to see more investments in active transportation networks that promote cycling, walking, rolling or taking public transit and reduce car dependency in our communities. I believe the benefits from these investments have far reaching benefits to all Oregonians. Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,
Heidi Wambaugh