

I am writing to urge you to prioritize investments in public transit and regional passenger rail in the upcoming transportation budget.

As someone who lives in Portland's inner city and does not own a car, I rely on public transit to access essential services, work, and social activities. I am one of the many Oregonians who either cannot or choose not to drive, and expanding transit services would dramatically improve my quality of life. More frequent and reliable buses and passenger rail would offer affordable, efficient, and sustainable transportation options, reducing the need for car ownership in a city already plagued by parking and traffic issues.

It's time to shift our focus away from highway expansion and toward a transportation system that benefits everyone, not just those who can afford a car. Widening highways has been proven to fail at solving congestion and instead contributes to air and noise pollution, particularly in neighborhoods like mine where highways cut through the heart of the city. This is a long-term health hazard, and it exacerbates economic inequality by prioritizing cars over transit, biking, and walking infrastructure. It's outrageous that over \$130 million has already been spent just on planning the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion, while roads across the state deteriorate and public transit systems remain underfunded.

We need to fully fund the State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) to ensure greater investments in transit across the state. This will not only support those of us who rely on public transportation, but it will also help Oregon meet its climate goals. With transportation responsible for 40% of the state's carbon emissions, we cannot afford to keep prioritizing car travel.

Finally, I want to see passenger rail become a viable alternative to driving for regional travel. Having hourly rail service through the Willamette Valley or connecting Portland with other cities in the Pacific Northwest would be a game changer.