

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

Let me start by saying I am a car-free Oregonian. I am just one of the 30% of Oregonians who do not drive. You have heard from these folks across the state. Whether that is due to age, ability, or income level, traveling around without a vehicle today is not for the faint of heart. We wait in the rain for too long for a bus that may never come. We risk life and limb walking and rolling on streets with vehicles that are increasingly more deadly to people outside of them.

With their self-made fiscal disaster, Oregon's Department of Transportation continues to ignore non-drivers. Expanding highways is extremely costly, and both the I-5 Rose Quarter project and Columbia River Crossing 2.0 (now re-branded the Interstate Bridge Replacement) have shown to be complete boondoggles. While the cost of replacing the Interstate bridge is low, the IBR is going to cost over \$10 Billion due to the excessive widening and rebuilding of seven highway interchanges! Had ODOT not pursued such costly highway expansions, we wouldn't be in this hole. The priority moving forward should be maintaining our current system and expanding alternatives to driving, not putting highway expansion ahead of funding our schools and hospitals.

Oregonians are increasingly getting older, and are unable to afford the exploding costs of housing and transportation. The cost to own and operate a vehicle is now well in excess of \$10,000 a year. We need to continue to invest in making Oregonian's daily needs accessible without a vehicle, and to provide frequent, reliable public transportation as a means of connecting people to education and job opportunities.

We also need to reconnect our communities by frequent, reliable, electric rail. Historically, Oregon had connected our major cities via passenger rail across the state. We could return to that era, and allow freight to travel 700% more efficiently across the state than it does today via trucking. Reviving the rail connection to Coos Bay should only be the beginning. Plans should begin to establish double-tracked electrified rail across the state to ensure reliable freight and passenger rail. This can be funded through Public-Private Partnerships between the federal government, state, tribes, private rail operators, and utilities.

Lastly, we have seen the Oregon Community Paths program explode in popularity. I would ask that the fund be replenished by creating an additional "deadly hood" registration fee for all vehicles with hood heights above 30". According to the Institute for Highway Safety, pedestrians who are involved in a vehicle crash are significantly more likely to die if the vehicle has a hood height above 30", as the pedestrian is impacted in the chest by the vehicle. (Source: <https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/vehicles-with-higher-more-vertical-front-ends-pose-greater-risk-to-pedestrians>). Colorado passed a similar increase in registration fees on these more deadly vehicles to fund safety improvements on their roadways.

Sincerely,
Richard Sheperd