

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB4165

Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

I write you today, not just as a proponent but as a passionate advocate for the enactment of House Bill 4165. This pivotal legislation mandates the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to meticulously craft and present a report detailing the essential statutory modifications required to equitably distribute the financial burdens of transportation infrastructure between light and heavy vehicles. This bill, set to take effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die, represents a monumental step toward rectifying the disparities in our current transportation funding framework.

For too long, the scales have been unjustly tipped, placing a disproportionate share of the fiscal responsibility on the shoulders of light vehicle owners, many of whom are working-class citizens striving to navigate the complexities of daily life. These individuals rely on their vehicles for essential activities such as commuting to work, transporting their families, and accessing vital services. Yet, they bear an inequitable portion of the costs associated with road maintenance and infrastructure improvements, costs that should, by all accounts of fairness, be more evenly spread across all beneficiaries of our transportation system, including the operators of heavy vehicles.

House Bill 4165 seeks to challenge and transform this inequitable status quo by ensuring that all road users contribute their fair share to the upkeep and enhancement of our transportation infrastructure. By requiring ODOT to identify and recommend statutory changes, this bill paves the way for a more balanced and just allocation of transportation costs. It acknowledges the undeniable truth that heavy vehicles, due to their significant weight and size, exert a far greater impact on our roads and highways, leading to accelerated wear and tear and necessitating more frequent and costly repairs.

In embracing this legislation, we are embracing the principles of social justice and equity that form the bedrock of a fair and inclusive society. We are acknowledging the need for a transportation funding model that reflects the actual usage and impact of different vehicle types on our infrastructure. This is not merely a matter of economic prudence; it is a matter of moral imperative. By realigning our transportation cost responsibilities, we can ensure that no individual or group is unduly burdened, and that our roads and highways can be maintained and improved without placing an unfair strain on those least able to bear it.

Furthermore, HB4165 represents an opportunity for Oregon to lead by example, demonstrating a commitment to equitable policy-making that could serve as a model for other states grappling with similar challenges. It is a testament to our collective resolve to address the injustices of the past and to forge a more equitable path forward.

In conclusion, I urge you, esteemed members of the Joint Committee on Transportation, to recognize the profound importance of House Bill 4165. This legislation is not just about balancing financial ledgers; it is about balancing the scales of justice. It is about ensuring that our transportation system is funded in a way that is fair, equitable, and reflective of the principles of solidarity that bind us as a community. I implore you to lend your support to this critical bill, to champion the cause of equity and justice, and to take a decisive step toward a more just and sustainable future for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.