

Submitter: Joseph Bugher

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation  
Funding

Measure, Appointment or  
Topic: LC 2

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

My name is Joe Bugher, a concerned resident of Oregon. I am writing to strongly oppose Governor Tina Kotek's proposed transportation funding package, which includes a 6-cent gas tax increase, higher vehicle registration and titling fees, a new road user charge for electric vehicles, and a doubling of the payroll tax for transit. This package, slated for consideration in the special session on August 29, 2025, represents an unnecessary and burdensome tax hike on Oregon families and businesses at a time when we can least afford it.

First, these increases will significantly raise the cost of living for everyday Oregonians. The gas tax would rise from 40 to 46 cents per gallon, adding to already high fuel costs amid persistent inflation. Vehicle registration fees would jump by \$42, titling fees by \$139, and the payroll tax would double from 0.1% to 0.2%. For the average family, this could mean over \$500 in additional annual costs, hitting low-income households and rural residents hardest, where driving long distances is essential for work, school, and daily needs.

Second, this proposal fails to address the root cause: mismanagement at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). ODOT faces a \$354 million deficit not due to lack of revenue, but poor priorities and bureaucratic bloat. From 2016 to 2024, ODOT added 362 positions costing over \$211 million annually, including high-salary roles like a DEI manager earning up to \$11,373 monthly. Yet, while pausing some executive hires after public outcry, the agency plans to lay off nearly 500 frontline workers—those who repair potholes, plow snow, and maintain our roads—without meaningful cuts to upper management. This endangers public safety, especially in rural areas where highways could become impassable during winter.

Oregon's overall budget is at a record \$140 billion, with transportation spending in line with other Western states. We don't need new taxes; we need accountability. Republicans have rightly suggested reprioritizing existing funds, paying down debt, and auditing ODOT's spending instead of rushing this package over Labor Day weekend. Public sentiment aligns with this—a recent poll showed 82% of Oregonians oppose the tax hike.

These taxes won't solve ODOT's problems; they'll just punish hardworking families while rewarding inefficiency. Previous attempts at massive transportation packages, like the failed HB 2025, faced broad opposition for similar reasons—it would have been the largest tax hike in Oregon history. I urge you to reject this proposal, demand real reforms at ODOT, and protect Oregonians from further financial strain. Vote no on new taxes without meaningful change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joe Bugher  
Sherwood, OR