



SIERRA CLUB

OREGON CHAPTER

August 22, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony on Transportation Funding Package – Special Session

Dear Co-Chairs Wagner and Fahey, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Drazan, and Members of the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding,

On behalf of the more than 55,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the transportation funding proposal currently under consideration during this special session.

We recognize the importance of ensuring that Oregon's transportation system remains functional and provides reliable and safe transportation options for all Oregonians. However, the expected funding package raises real concerns for our members who are deeply committed to reducing emissions and promoting cleaner alternatives, especially at a time when these ideas are under attack at a federal level.

Public transit must be fully funded to ensure access and reduce emissions, and we are concerned by TriMet's announced plans¹ to reduce bus and MAX service by 10% starting in November 2025, including cuts to up to 45 bus routes² and significant changes to rail access. Transit must be frequent, reliable, and accessible to provide a viable alternative to car travel. At a time when we should be expanding transit access—particularly for lower-income and frontline communities—the Legislature must ensure full funding for existing, and ideally expanded, operations. We urge lawmakers to prioritize restoring and protecting public transit service levels before considering new highway or road expansion projects that will continue to encourage gasoline car travel.

Also problematic is the proposal to expand the Road Usage Charge (RUC) for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. As proposed, the RUC would require Electric Vehicle (EV) drivers to pay per-mile fees equivalent to what a gas-powered car would pay at just 20 mpg, despite the average Oregon car achieving closer to 30 mpg. This means EV drivers—who produce zero tailpipe emissions—would end up paying more per mile than many gas drivers. By 2031, EV drivers could pay \$100+ more annually than gasoline car owners, and plug-in hybrid drivers could pay nearly

¹ <https://trimet.org/budgetcuts/>

² https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2025/07/01/odot-director-calls-legislatures-transportation-bill-failure-s-hocking-scary-warns-of-layoffs/?utm_source=chatgpt.com



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double³. A proposed additional \$30 fee on EV vehicles further penalizes EV owners⁴. This is the wrong direction. Oregon needs to incentivize, not penalize, the cleanest vehicle technologies.

In the same vein, we are deeply concerned that RUC for commercial vehicles would apply only to electric delivery trucks, penalizing the very companies investing in cleaner fleets.

While we acknowledge the need to stabilize transportation funding as gas tax revenue declines, **we urge lawmakers to explore more equitable approaches that do not disincentivize electric vehicle adoption during a critical window for climate action.**

We support proposed provisions that increase **oversight and accountability at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)**, including biennial performance audits by the Secretary of State and quarterly reporting on major projects and spending. ODOT should not operate without clear accountability for ensuring that public dollars are spent efficiently and support Oregon's overall transportation goals, including climate and equity commitments. We urge the Legislature to focus new ODOT funds on prioritizing system maintenance and safety rather than highway expansion, and to use climate-aligned performance metrics to review and hold ODOT accountable.

Oregon's transportation investments must move us toward a **zero-emission, multimodal future**, not lock us further into car dependency and fossil fuel infrastructure.

While the special session transportation package is likely a far cry from the comprehensive package we need in order to accelerate our transition to a cleaner future, it still presents an opportunity to at least ensure that we are not moving backwards in our goals toward a safer, cleaner, more equitable transportation system for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Bowes
Policy Strategist
Sierra Club Oregon

Amanda Short
Legislative Committee Member
Sierra Club Oregon

³<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/202511/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/309800>

⁴ <https://www.opb.org/article/2025/08/20/tina-kotek-oregon-transportation-funding-bill-special-session/>