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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or LC 2
Topic:

Dear Members of the Committee,

I write today as a concerned Oregonian and advocate for working families, to express strong opposition to the proposed transportation funding bill. While the struggle to finance transportation infrastructure amid rising shortfalls is real, the current plan places undue burden on families and fails to address critical structural issues in ODOT's fiscal management.

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1. Disproportionate Financial Burden on Working Families

The proposed funding strategy—comprising a 6-cent increase to the gas tax (raising the state rate from 40¢ to 46¢ per gallon), a doubling of vehicle registration fees, a significant hike in title fees (from about \$139 to over \$216), and a doubling of the transit payroll tax—will collectively take a toll on everyday Oregonians. ?

These increases disproportionately impact working families, especially those struggling with the rising cost of living, increased commuting expenses, and limited financial flexibility. Rather than deepening these pressures, we should pursue strategies that distribute funding burdens more equitably.

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2. Reallocating from Projects That Won't Start for Years

It's concerning that intended funds may be diverted from long-term transportation projects, many of which are years away from commencement. Rather than reallocating resources from future priorities, the Legislature should explore options that:

- Unlock flexibility in using existing funds for critical, near-term needs (as advocated by ODOT leadership). ?
- Delay or phase projects strategically to meet the most urgent infrastructure needs without raising taxes significantly.

A more thoughtful budget reallocation and prioritization process would better serve communities in the short and long term.

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3. Executive Compensation Out of Step with Public Strain

There is increasing public concern about the discrepancy between escalating costs imposed on Oregon families and the compensation of agency leadership. Many agency heads, including those at ODOT, receive annual salaries exceeding \$200,000. At a moment when everyday Oregonians face economic pressures, transparency and fairness demand scrutiny of executive pay.

I urge the Legislature to investigate whether such compensation aligns with public expectations, especially when frontline services and maintenance are being scaled back due to budget constraints.

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4. Demand for Accountability: An ODOT Audit Is Critical

ODOT's 10-year budget has climbed from approximately \$3.81 billion (2013–15) to \$6.12 billion (2023–25)—a nearly 60% increase. However, outcomes from past major funding efforts raise red flags: of nearly \$1 billion raised by the 2017 funding package, just \$23 million went to actual maintenance. ?

Given that, an independent, comprehensive audit of ODOT's spending is imperative to:

- Identify how prior funds were allocated—particularly funds slated for maintenance versus administrative or long-term projects.
- Ensure taxpayer dollars are directed efficiently and effectively.
- Restore public trust in the transportation funding process.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, while reliable transportation funding is essential, the proposed bill shifts the burden unjustly to working families, reallocates from projects not yet underway, overlooks executive compensation concerns, and sidesteps accountability—without requiring basic transparency through an audit.

I urge the Committee to:

1. Put a pause on sweeping tax increases that financially strain ordinary Oregonians.
2. Examine current fund allocation and identify flexibility in reprogramming

existing resources for immediate, high-need areas.

3. Commission an audit of ODOT's spending and project outcomes.
4. Review executive compensation levels in the context of service reductions and taxpayer pain.

Oregonians deserve transportation policies that are fair, transparent, and fiscally responsible. Thank you for your time and consideration.