

To: Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding, 8/25/25 public hearing

Regarding: Testimony on behalf of an amendment to LC 2 to fund investigation of the Climate Rail Alliance recommendations

Dear Members of the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding:

Here are highlights from the Climate Rail Alliance, (CRA), recommendations previously submitted to the Joint Committee on Transportation during the Summer-Fall 2024, pre-session, public hearings:

- (1) Reduce the volume of shipping and travel on highways to reduce cost to ODOT.
- (2) Redesign, invest in, and redeploy rail and transit to attract significant new volumes of shipping and travel off Oregon highways.
- (3a) Pay for the new rail and transit with sharply increased revenue from significantly more popular service and a tax on the percentage user savings from the highway mode.
- (3b) Pay for capital railroad improvements with a tax on the percentage of operating ratio savings for conventional rail freight.

Endorsements of the CRA Recommendations:

I am pleased to quote two friends who maintain significant influence in Oregon transportation policy.

First, my friend Dean Suhr, author of IP-31 and co-founder of [Vote Before Tolls](https://votebeforetolls.org), (votebeforetolls.org), who writes of the CRA recommendations:

“Increasing efficiency is a better option than higher taxes. The Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding should consider directing ODOT to consider creative ways to make overall transportation costs and capacity more efficient. One option is investments that increase the use of rail for freight, which will free up capacity and reduce wear on our existing highways.”

Second, I am pleased to quote my friend Gary Clark, Chair, [Neighbors For A Better Crossing](https://neighbors4a-bettercrossing.org), (<https://neighbors4a-bettercrossing.org>), speaking in support of the CRA recommendations:

“On behalf of Neighbors For A Better Crossing, we support all modes of transportation that will increase highway and rail service in the Pacific Northwest at an affordable rate, and we fully support the CRA recommendations.”

“The Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding needs to be aware that the ODOT and WSDOT, Interstate Bridge Replacement, (IBR), offers only one additional "auxiliary" traffic lane in both directions, and will do little to solve traffic congestion on I-5 at the Columbia River crossing. This will put even more emphasis on shipping freight by rail, and travel by rail.”

“Neighbors For A Better Crossing highly recommends directing the IBR to cancel their mega bridge, install a less expensive Immersed Tube Tunnel, (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPJCYrxqyT8>), and preserve the existing, historic Interstate Bridge.”

“This will allow only through traffic and proposed light rail extension to exclusively use the tunnel, while permitting local traffic accessing Hayden Island to continue to use the existing bridge, thus solving traffic congestion at the crossing. The existing historic bridge would then serve as a "fourth" crossing in the event of a Cascadia style earthquake.”

The Immersed Tube Tunnel for which Neighbors For A Better Crossing advocates is cost efficient and effective in contrast to the proposed Interstate Bridge Replacement, in the same way the CRA recommendations for rail and transit are cost efficient and effective.

Both CRA and Neighbors For A Better Crossing advocate innovative strategies that lower transportation cost for taxpayers, business, and average working people.

Next Steps:

The CRA recommendations submitted to the Joint Committee on Transportation a year ago were not properly amplified to provide political compromise and a strategic shift in transportation policy that is now needed.

Will the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding please:

(1) Read the full [Climate Rail Alliance Recommendations for the State of Oregon 2025 Transportation Bill](https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023I1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/286280), (<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023I1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/286280>).

(2) Reach out to me at CRA for questions and feedback.

(3) Allocate planning funds in LC 2 for a small team of rail and transit subject matter experts, experienced in and knowledgeable of both freight and travel logistics, under the guidance of the Oregon Transportation Commission, to work full-time for one year to fully vet and detail the CRA recommendations, reporting back to the legislature and governor monthly with updates on progress and results.

I look forward to your response.

Best Regards,

Robinson Foster
West Linn, OR
info@climaterailalliance.org
climaterailalliance.org

Copies to my representatives:

Senate President and Co-Chair, Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding, Rob
Wagner, District 19

Representative Jules Walters, District 37

###