

Submitter: Tim Gates

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding

Measure, Appointment or
Topic: LC 2

I am writing as a concerned citizen and strongly urge you to vote against the proposed transportation funding bill during the special legislative session scheduled for August 29, 2025. This bill, introduced by Governor Tina Kotek to address a reported \$350 million shortfall in the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) budget, would raise approximately \$791 million to \$857 million over the next two years through increases in vehicle registration fees, gas taxes, and payroll taxes. While the intent to prevent ODOT layoffs and maintain basic road operations may seem pressing, this measure represents a short-sighted bailout that fails to address ODOT's longstanding issues of mismanagement, inefficiency, and lack of accountability. Instead of imposing new financial burdens on Oregonians, we need meaningful reforms before committing more taxpayer dollars.

The proposed special session bill echoes the flaws of the 2017 transportation funding package, House Bill (HB) 2017, also known as "Keep Oregon Moving, without addressing them. It serves as a band-aid, potentially raising \$5.7 billion over 10 years through regressive tax hikes that Oregonians—already grappling with high inflation and living costs—cannot afford. Public testimony has echoed this, with opponents calling for greater financial accountability from ODOT rather than more taxpayer money. ODOT itself has quietly proposed an alternative: granting flexibility to redirect existing funds toward maintenance, such as repurposing unobligated federal dollars or changing statutes to prioritize essentials over restricted projects. This approach could avoid layoffs and cuts without new taxes, but it requires legislative action to reform spending mandates. Redirecting funds might involve tradeoffs, like delaying non-essential projects, but it's a fiscally responsible path that demands ODOT "clean up its act" first, as advocated by groups like the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB).

Voting for this bill would perpetuate a cycle of inefficiency: pouring money into an agency plagued by poor management without reforms. It risks inequitable impacts on low-income and rural residents, who bear the brunt of fee increases while seeing limited benefits. Instead, I implore you to vote no and advocate for a comprehensive audit of ODOT, statutory changes to enable flexible use of existing revenues, and a bipartisan process to develop a long-term, equitable transportation plan that prioritizes accountability and sustainability.

Oregon deserves better than another hasty tax increase that ignores past lessons.