

June 10, 2025

Joint Committee on Transportation Reinvestment--

I am writing in support of the many steps that HB 2025 takes toward funding our future by investing in infrastructure in communities throughout the state, and establishing a diversified means of supporting Oregon's transportation systems. In many ways, I believe that HB 2025 could be *even stronger* by better centering our community's climate and life-safety goals, and including a greater range of funding for ways of getting from a to be safely off-street trails.

Support for Tackling Our Housing, Climate, and Transportation Together

As a local development planner working in the suburbs, I know that Oregon still struggles with a housing crisis that I'm glad to see is still getting a lot of attention from the governor and legislature. Transit and housing are intertwined, and potential cuts to bus lines would put our state's housing and employment goals farther out of reach while undermining existing investments. A home where you can't get to a job or a store puts our community members at further disadvantage. Affordable transit allows a lot of families to reduce both their transportation and housing cost burden, and expands the accessible range of places to live and job options within reach. Likewise, the Great Streets program to create complete streets and Safe Routes to School are critical ways to get more out of these investments.

The legislature has already adopted Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities legislation predicated on the idea of less car-dependent communities. Deregulation to reduce parking standards was the free part, but as a local planner, I talk to people on the phone and at the counter who are frustrated to see that there's still no local bus and still no reasonably safe way to cross the major arterial near their home. Investing in transit and safety infrastructure is necessary to bring CFEC full circle.

Transit on a Positive Feedback Loop

As someone who primarily walks and rides transit to get around, I also know that the Republican agenda is profoundly cynical and out of sync with my everyday experiences. Absolutely we have past disinvestment that leads to some of the unsafe crossings I go through, and it's no secret the 20's have been rough on a lot of fronts including for transit agencies. That's not an excuse to turn our backs on investing in communities! As someone who rides the bus and Blue line between Portland and Gresham for work, I won't deny I've had a few less-than-stellar rides, but I've always gotten where I was going safely, and I can also look around and see that ridership is recovering, and people are even remembering how to navigate the social niceties and norms of a full bus. People are even remembering headphones. As more people have started riding again, there's a positive feedback loop where we all set the norm for a calm ride together. On transit, I save money, reduce the climate impact of my trips, and better know my community in its broad diversity. If anything, this is a critical juncture for continued recovery with active investment in transit and climate-forward actions like electrification and strategies that divide fast motor vehicle traffic from other users. It's a time to believe in our ability to tackle our affordability and climate goals while building thriving places to live and work.

Horse-Trading

While I can understand some horse-trading goes into a package like this, this bill seems like an odd place to commit to lane widths. Many of our communities have old narrower roads that well pre-date cars, where getting back to basics is really about retrofitting the motor vehicle newcomers away from the bodies of people outside of cars who have always been there and will always belong there. If such a change is needed, at least consider exceptions for bridges and other constrained areas to allow for case-by-case consideration without legislative-level micromanagement.

Support for Broad Revenue Sources

I can sympathize that for many it doesn't feel fair that this has to be the time to step up and invest in our infrastructure. Past disinvestment by prior leadership puts us all at a disadvantage, and indeed, I also wish we were inheriting a legacy of continued investment and constant maintenance. But like the owner of a fixer-upper home, this is the situation we have, and our best hope is ourselves. The gas tax raise looks high on its own compared to other places, but it's worth remembering that we have no sales tax that many of those other places do, while other revenue stream decreases like property tax compression are coming home to roost. We have all the more need to have diversified state-specific revenue that can help us weather the ups and downs of changing social patterns and the whims of our increasingly autocratic federal government. We can't keep hoping that there will be a better future time when it's easier to invest in where we live, or to take serious climate action: the time is now.

Sincerely,
Tabitha Boschetti