

Submitter: Kenton Johnson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Dear Representatives,

I don't keep up with every bill under consideration, but this one caught my attention — and it will impact my family's finances in a way that has my wife seriously asking me to consider moving out of state. It is bills like this one that have brought us to this point. Please do not pass it.

I love Oregon. I don't want to live anywhere else. But the increasing taxes, fees, and cost burdens from the state are outpacing the cost-of-living increases in my paycheck. After 22 years in this beautiful state, as an example, I can say that I've rarely seen potholes repaired as quickly or as well as in other states. Public transportation — while vital for many — simply does not meet my needs.

I already pay plenty for gas. My friends in other states laugh when I tell them what we pay now — and that's before adding another 12 to 15 cents per gallon. It is bills like this one that have brought us to this point. Please do not pass it.

As a volunteer first responder, called by our 911 center to incidents for over a dozen years:

I cannot take a public bus to a house fire to help a family in crisis.

I cannot ride the MAX to a suicide scene to assist grieving survivors.

I cannot hop on a trolley to comfort a parent as their child's body is pulled from one of our rivers.

But

I can drive a survivor to the hospital to view their loved one after a fatal crash.

I can get myself to the base of a search-and-rescue operation deep in the forest to bring calm and care.

I can use my vehicle to pick up meals, blankets, and clothing for flood and mudslide victims.

I do pay a lot in taxes for each gallon of gas — and I've done so willingly — but it strains our family's budget. This bill will only make that worse. Please do not pass it.

Yes, I understand that some of what I'm saying may sound like a "first world problem" — and in many ways, it is. We live modestly and are content. We don't eat out often. We don't rent places at the beach on a whim. We don't buy expensive cuts of meat. And that's fine — we're grateful. We know we're better off than many people in the

world and even in our own communities. But if I were making this same income in Texas, Idaho, Florida, Montana, or Wyoming, we'd keep more of it — and we'd be able to give more to nonprofits and causes we care about, support local businesses, and I could treat my dear wife of almost 40 yrs to more things on occasion. Again, it is bills like this one that have made that harder. Please do not pass it.

I'm 62 and have never purchased a brand-new car. I simply haven't made enough in my career to justify it, especially given my family and volunteer priorities. I've enjoyed some great used cars — and their lower price tags — but paying an additional 1% tax, even on a used vehicle, means a couple fewer tanks of gas I can afford. And that's before this bill's proposed increases! It is bills like this one that have brought us to this point. Please do not pass it.

I'm asking you — please don't add more financial burden to families like mine, especially now, with food costs where they are. Instead, I urge the departments who would benefit from this bill to examine their current budgets and consider doing what my family has to do:

- Trim nonessential spending

- Streamline processes

- Reconsider discretionary purchases — artwork, new furniture, travel

- Shift some in-person meetings to online platforms

- Evaluate whether some contractors are overcharging

Thank you for taking my testimony. I know that no legislator serves simply for personal gain, and I'm grateful to you all for serving our state — whether or not we agree on every issue.

That said, I strongly urge you: please do not pass this bill.

Sincerely,  
Kenton Johnson  
Sandy, Oregon