

Honorable Members of the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding,

I am writing to strongly oppose House Bill 3991, Governor Tina Kotek's proposed transportation funding package, which seeks to raise \$5.8 billion over the next decade through increases in gas taxes, vehicle registration and title fees, payroll taxes, and new fees on electric vehicle drivers. While I recognize the importance of maintaining Oregon's transportation infrastructure, this bill represents an unnecessary and burdensome tax increase on Oregonians who are already strained by rising costs of living. The arguments for this bill rely on a false choice between tax hikes and service cuts, ignoring viable alternatives that prioritize fiscal responsibility and efficient use of existing funds.

First, the claim that new taxes are the only way to avoid layoffs at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and maintain road services is misleading. ODOT's budget challenges stem from statutory restrictions that limit how existing funds can be allocated. As noted by State Representative Shelly Boshart Davis, redirecting existing funds—such as those currently earmarked for non-essential projects like public transit expansions or climate initiatives—could provide the \$290 million needed to avert layoffs and maintain core road maintenance without raising taxes. For example, reallocating funds from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) or other restricted sources could preserve jobs and ensure safe roads without adding financial strain on Oregonians.[](<https://www.wweek.com/news/state/2025/08/23/as-special-session-looms-on-transportation-funding-odot-quietly-offers-alternative-to-new-taxes/>)[](<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/politics/transportation-bill-hearing-special-session/283-86aed5bf-5146-480e-81ef-aa2cd4830471>)

Second, ODOT's spending priorities must be realigned to focus on core functions: ensuring safe and reliable roads and bridges. The agency's current focus includes non-essential initiatives such as electric bus programs, aesthetic projects, and social justice-related expenditures, which divert resources from critical maintenance needs. Oregonians expect ODOT to prioritize plowing mountain passes, filling potholes, and responding to accidents—not funding flower beds or ideological projects. This bill fails to address these misplaced priorities and instead doubles down on a tax-and-spend approach that burdens working families.

Third, the special session's chaotic start raises serious questions about the urgency and leadership behind this bill. On August 29, 2025, the Oregon House lacked a quorum three times to gavel in, with five Democratic representatives absent, and the Senate was missing three Democratic senators. If this \$5.8 billion package is truly an emergency, why did key members of the majority party fail to show up? The responsibility to lead and build consensus lies with Governor Kotek and her party, not with Republicans who have consistently opposed this flawed proposal. The absence of Democratic lawmakers undermines the credibility of claims that this bill is critical to Oregon's immediate needs.[](https://www.heraldandnews.com/news/oregon-s-special-session-stumbles-on-first-day-as-house-waits-for-enough-people/article_77f48b42-8a4a-43f7-b418-ddbe80093e74.html)[](<https://www.opb.org/article/2025/08/29/oregon-politics-democrats-republicans-transportation-taxes/>)

Finally, Oregon's broader fiscal mismanagement cannot be ignored. With a population of 4.2 million, Oregon's \$138 billion budget dwarfs Washington's \$77.1 billion budget for a population of 8.1 million. This disparity suggests a spending problem, not a revenue shortage. Oregonians already face some of the highest taxes in the nation, yet our state ranks poorly in outcomes. Instead of piling on new taxes, the Legislature should scrutinize ODOT's inefficiencies and reprioritize existing funds to address the \$350 million shortfall without further burdening families and businesses.

In conclusion, House Bill 3991 is a flawed and unnecessary tax hike that fails to address ODOT's structural issues or prioritize core transportation needs. I urge the Committee to reject this bill and explore alternatives that redirect existing funds, reform ODOT's spending priorities, and respect the financial

realities faced by Oregonians. The Legislature has an opportunity to demonstrate fiscal responsibility and leadership—let's not squander it with another tax-and-spend package.

Sincerely,
Shelena Hunter
Concerned Oregon Citizen