

Submitter: Tobias Hodges

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Session Committee On Transportation
Funding

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3991

Dear Co-Chairs Fahey and Wagner, Vice Chairs Drazen and Bonham, and members of the committee:

My name is Tobias Hodges, and I live in Happy Valley. I'm testifying today because this special session budget stopgap is vital, but the work is not done here. I urge you to come back to pass a transportation package that works for ALL Oregonians and reflects our shared values of safety, affordability, equity, and climate resilience.

Oregon's communities need a better transportation system that is healthy, affordable, and safe. Imagine an Oregon where we all have the freedom to choose how we get to work, school, or the doctor safely and on time. Relatively small investments now can have huge payouts in getting all Oregonians where they need to go while improving our economy, environment, and public health.

It's essential to continue the work to pass a transportation package that invests deeply in public transit and active transportation modes. We need to come back to fully fund Safe Routes to School, Great Streets, and Oregon Community Paths. This will improve safety and quality of life for all Oregonians. A fully-funded, safe, multimodal system keeps people and goods moving and families and businesses thriving. We can't afford to stop investing in public transit. Transportation is the second largest household expense, and lawmakers must come back to the table to invest in public transit and active transportation, which will save money for both households and the state, and improves health outcomes for all family members. Additionally, the massive rise in cost of ownership of a vehicle has put owning and maintaining a vehicle even more out of reach for low-income and working-class families. Public transit addresses this inequality at scale. For my family in Happy Valley, we have only one car. We also have a baby girl on the way very soon, so we will come up against the impossible decision of going into heavy debt to afford a second car, OR the state can invest in alternative modes of transportation.

By the time our child is old enough to walk, we should be able to safely walk to school together. By the time they are able to bicycle, we should be able to safely bicycle to the grocery store together. By the time they are able to take public transit, they should be able to safely get to their extracurriculars on time with transit.

None of this is possible now.

New dollars must be prioritized to meet our safety, climate, and mobility needs. If we're going to ask Oregonians to pay more, we have an obligation to put their dollars to work for the future.

That means improving health and safety by funding popular but underfunded programs like Safe Routes to School, Great Streets, and Oregon Community Paths. That means lowering household costs for families with a statewide program offering fare-free transit for riders younger than 22. That means doing the right thing for all Oregonians by investing in safe, reliable public transit and safe, connected active transportation options.

We can't afford to wait. We must come back in the next legislative sessions to build a future where every Oregonian has access to safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation options. I urge you to remember that this budget stopgap is the bare minimum of what Oregonians require. We must come back to pass a transportation package that moves Oregon forward.

Sincerely,
Tobias Hodges
Happy Valley, Oregon.