

Submitter: Beth Keyser

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Session Committee On Transportation  
Funding

Measure, Appointment or  
Topic: HB3991

Dear Oregon Legislators,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the transportation funding bill currently under consideration in the special legislative session that convened on August 29, 2025. While I appreciate the efforts to address Oregon's infrastructure needs, this proposal will impose unnecessary financial burdens on everyday Oregonians like myself, without ensuring that our tax dollars are used efficiently or effectively by the Oregon Department of Transportation.

The bill includes a 6-cent per gallon increase to the state gas tax, bringing it to 46 cents per gallon, along with significant hikes in vehicle registration and title fees, ranging from \$42 to \$132, and additional surcharges on electric and high-mileage vehicles. These changes will directly raise my cost of living, affecting everything from daily commutes to vehicle purchases and transfers. In a time when families are already stretched thin, these tax increases feel like an undue penalty on hardworking residents who rely on their vehicles for essential travel.

Moreover, I have serious doubts that this new revenue will truly benefit ODOT's core mission of maintaining and expanding our roads. Recent audits have exposed alarming issues within ODOT, including a staggering \$1.1 billion overestimation of revenue in the 2023-25 budget cycle, accounting errors totaling \$1.8 billion across state agencies in 2024, and persistent problems with high staff turnover and poor project management. These findings point to systemic waste and inefficiency that must be addressed before asking taxpayers for more money. I urge you to mandate a comprehensive audit of ODOT to uncover and eliminate abusive spending practices that are squandering public funds.

One glaring example of misplaced priorities is ODOT's allocation of approximately \$28 million toward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. While inclusivity is important, this expenditure diverts critical resources away from urgent needs like road maintenance and expansion. I demand that these funds be redirected immediately to tangible infrastructure improvements that benefit all Oregonians, rather than non-essential programs.

Furthermore, ODOT must stop wasting money on questionable projects, such as tearing down and replacing perfectly functional bridges. Critics have highlighted costly endeavors like the Interstate 5 bridge replacement and the Center Street

Bridge retrofit, which have ballooned in expenses—totaling hundreds of millions—due to delays, overruns, and poor planning. We need wise project selection that prioritizes safety and efficiency without unnecessary demolitions or expansions that serve little practical purpose. Oregon's history of demolishing unfinished or underutilized structures at great cost, as seen in past projects, should serve as a cautionary tale against repeating such mistakes.

At its core, this issue reflects a misunderstanding of basic economics by those pushing for these tax hikes. Keeping more money in the pockets of individuals and families allows us to spend, invest, and stimulate the economy, which in turn generates sustainable tax revenue for the state. Policies should foster business growth and innovation to broaden the tax base naturally, rather than relying on regressive increases that stifle prosperity. Raising taxes now will only hinder economic recovery and exacerbate the very budget shortfalls ODOT faces.

I respectfully but firmly call on you to do the right thing: reject this bill, hold ODOT accountable through rigorous oversight, cut wasteful spending, and focus on policies that empower Oregonians to thrive. Our state's future depends on prudent stewardship of taxpayer dollars—not more burdens on those who can least afford them.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,  
Beth Keyser