

Honorable Members of the Joint Special Session Committee on Transportation...

From: Shelena Hunter (ksnjhunter@icloud.com)

To: ksnjhunter@frontier.com

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Honorable Members of the Joint Special Session Committee on Transportation Funding,

My name is Shelena Hunter, an Oregon resident, and I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 3992, which proposes significant tax increases to fund transportation projects. While I recognize the importance of maintaining Oregon's roads, bridges, and transit systems, I strongly oppose this bill due to its financial burden on Oregonians, lack of adequate public input, and failure to prioritize existing resources. We do not need 22 extra administrative positions. We need auditing of ODOT with this move. We need accountability and transparency, which we are not getting.

First, the proposed tax increases, including doubling the payroll tax from 0.1% to 0.2% and raising the gas tax by 6 cents per gallon, place an unfair strain on working families and small businesses. Based on Oregon's average 2023 salary of \$68,283, the payroll tax alone would cost the average worker an additional \$136 annually. For families already struggling with rising costs for housing, groceries, and utilities, this additional expense is unsustainable. As Laurie Preston from Idanha stated during the August 25 hearing, "We have no more left to give." Small business owners, like Karen Chirre of Portland Stadium Superette, have also expressed concerns about the economic impact, noting that businesses are already closing due to financial pressures.

Second, the rushed timeline of this special session limits meaningful public engagement. The failure of HB 2025 and HB 3402 in the regular session suggests that lawmakers have not fully addressed public concerns about tax hikes. With only two public hearings and limited time for testimony, Oregonians—especially those in rural areas like myself—feel sidelined. The overwhelming opposition in written testimony, with 96% of 1,719 comments against the proposal as of August 25, reflects a clear public sentiment that this bill does not represent our needs.

Finally, HB 3992 fails to explore alternatives to new taxes, such as redirecting existing funds. Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis has pointed out that ODOT has money allocated for capital projects that cannot be used for maintenance due to statutory restrictions. Rather than raising taxes, the legislature should reform these restrictions to prioritize essential services like road maintenance and plowing without further burdening taxpayers. The state's own Highway Cost Allocation Study shows that heavy vehicles overpay their share, yet this bill does little to address such inequities comprehensively.

I urge you to reject HB 3992 and focus on solutions that respect Oregonians' financial realities, enhance transparency, and maximize existing resources. Our communities deserve a transportation plan that works for all of us, not one that adds to our economic strain. We do not need more administrative positions, we need accountability and transparency. 96% of your voters are against this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Shelena Hunter, Oregon

Sent from my iPhone