

Submitter: Amy Carlson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

I'm submitting testimony to urge you to amend HB 2025 to increase investment in Oregon Community Paths via the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund.

More than 80% of Oregonians report using local trails or off-street paths - I'm one of them! Off-street paths provide us the safest alternatives to walking or riding on high-speed and high-traffic roadways. Just two weeks ago when looking for a bike ride to do in the Salem area, we chose against a road with a bike path that wasn't consistently wide enough to feel safe with cars going by at 45 miles per hour. So we ended up splitting our 30 mile ride into two sections (and had to travel by car in between) in order to stay on off-street paths. While I bike commute using bike paths on streets regularly, off-street paths are not only far safer, they are the most enjoyable.

Because of that appeal and enjoyment, off-street paths also offer valuable visitor amenities and support Oregon's outdoor recreation and tourism economies, building economic vitality across Oregon communities. The ROI of significant trail investments nationwide is well-documented. Plus, the Oregon Community Paths program provides one of the only sources of matching funds for the state and for local governments to leverage federal funding for trail projects in Oregon.

Oregon Community Paths program funds grants for project development, construction, reconstruction, major resurfacing or other improvements of multi-use paths that improve access and safety for people walking and bicycling. This program is used to fund the off-street portions of Safe Routes to School projects as well as access to parks, transit centers, and alternatives to high-speed roadways. The program was oversubscribed by more than 4:1 in its first two funding cycles, so the need is strong.

As someone who does a lot of work with rural communities across Oregon, I know it is especially critical for rural communities to be able to access this program because off-street paths are frequently the only alternative to walking, running, or biking on the state highway system.

I join many others in asking that a very small portion of the new funding identified in the transportation package be allocated to this program through the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund which exclusively funds the Oregon Community Paths

program.

I support the proposed investments already identified in the package for on-street safety through Safe Routes to School and Great Streets. I urge you to complement these investments with a modest investment in the Oregon Community Paths program that will have major positive impacts around the state, saving lives, reducing healthcare system costs, attracting visitors, creating safe and enjoyable recreation opportunities for all.

There is broad public support for investing in trails. I urge you to advocate with your colleagues on the Joint Transportation Committee for amending HB 2025 to direct a small portion of new revenue to off-street trails via the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund. Robust access to healthy modes of transportation supports equity, safety, climate, and other state goals.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.  
Amy Carlson