



www.RogueClimate.org || PO Box 1980, Phoenix, OR 97535 || 541-301-9204

Coos Bay Office: 243 S. 2nd St. Coos Bay, OR 97420 || 541-816-0758

Re: Rogue Climate Testimony regarding SB 1542 and SB 1543

Dear Chair Gorsek, Vice-chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of SB 1542 and SB 1543.

My name is Abby Knipp and I live in North Bend, in Coos County.

As a community organizer on the South Coast with Rogue Climate, which has offices in both Coos Bay and Phoenix, the most significant barrier I hear from people who want to get involved in the community is transportation. People can't get to events because there are no buses that travel to their area; existing bus lines stop running at 5:30pm; they don't feel safe walking or biking without a bike lane; or taxis are too expensive for them. Sidewalks are limited with a lack of accessible ramps, forcing our neighbors in wheelchairs to travel in the street.

The lack of safe and reliable transportation is a serious issue, especially as climate change is causing more severe and frequent flooding that makes travel dangerous on roads that have not been maintained. Our tsunami routes are outdated and insufficient if an emergency were to occur. ODOT is taking on new projects we can't afford to maintain while neglecting the roads we already use every day. Southern Oregonians are waiting for safer streets and reliable bridges, but those repairs are being sacrificed for new projects that haven't been priced out yet. Rural communities deserve investment in safe, inter-city and multi-modal infrastructure but seem to be at the bottom of the list for investment compared to the rest of the state.

Rogue Climate supports SB 1542 (Measure What We Drive) and SB 1543 (Guardrails for Good Governance) because our communities know firsthand that we must close the gaps in ODOT investment and governance practices that are currently delaying and deprioritizing preservation, seismic, and safety projects on the Coast. Without significant and sustainable funding for electrification, public transit and safe streets, Oregon will fall short of its climate and public health commitments. We are concerned about the repeal of the short-term transportation funding fix that was passed during the special session. This immediately halted new money coming into our communities at a time when flooding, landslides and cold weather are at their worst. Over the holidays, we experienced flooding from extreme rainfall that made it impossible for some



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community members to leave their homes for groceries or work. Just a couple weeks ago, we saw another king tide flooding event that restricted travel in downtown Coos Bay on the already crumbling highway 101. This is not new, flooding happens all over Coos County where it crosses 101 and it creates incredibly dangerous driving conditions. This consistent flooding leaves coastal residents in a cycle of weakened roadways, frequent travel delays and the inability to meet daily needs like going to work, school or the doctor.

SB 1542 and SB 1543 are a good first step towards managing critical transportation projects in a way that benefits communities across our state equally. SB 1542 mandates a safety and maintenance floor for how worn and damaged our roads can get. This means we wouldn't have to face endless delays and uphill fights for urgent repairs; instead, we'd automatically prioritize projects that can help us catch up on safety, maintenance, and resilience when we make our next investments. This takes ODOT's stated policy of fixing current roads and bridges first and makes it functional and enforceable. In SB 1543, the Oregon Transmission Commission would be modernized to ensure every Oregonian has a voice, setting a higher standard for transparency by requiring OTC materials to be posted at least 24 hours before the public comment period closes, giving the public, especially rural communities, a real chance to be heard. Southern Oregon voices must be uplifted in the decision-making process as we envision and implement a new transportation future in our state. We look forward to continuing the conversation in 2027 around a safe, affordable, accountable, and climate-forward transportation sector that has multiple avenues for long-term maintenance funding sources.

On behalf of community members across Southern Oregon and the South Coast, we are calling on you to ensure that funding goes to rural and coastal community safety, transit, resilient infrastructure and access now. Climate justice in our transportation needs to be prioritized. Please vote in support of SB 1542 and SB 1543.

Sincerely,

Abby Knipp, Community Organizer

Zöe Serrano, Legislative Coordinator