

SB 395: support testimony

Thank you, Co-chairs Beyer and McClain, Co-Vice Chairs Boquist and Noble, and members of the committee (so good to see you). I am a rural resident and a farmer, and I know this: Rural roads need safety improvements. And I hope you share with me this simple idea: that everyone should be able to get from one place to another safely, without having to drive a car.

SB 395 is about more than money. It is the opportunity to hold ODOT accountable for dedicated spending.

SB 395 is the opportunity to make Safe Routes an allocation-based program. Why does that matter? Safe Routes to Schools is grant-based, so when an applicant doesn't get the grant, they don't get the safety improvements for school kids.

The 1% allocation is important, but it is too little to make an effective program for counties...raising the minimum to 5% is one of the best ways to give communities local control over effective amounts of money for safety improvements. For example: our entire allocation for 2019 went to a 20' long path on a rebuilt bridge on a county road; that's it. Our public works dept could use this annual 5% to safety-fy an entire road.

Does this take away from necessary road work? No. SB 395 is not about more or less money. It is about priorities. This tells ODOT that you value safety for people *not* in cars. This is what you do: you give them the priorities when you craft their budget.

As you know, one of the most effective ways to solve problems that affect Oregonians is to set up the framework and budget here in the Capitol and then have the solutions locally-designed and - implemented. We know the safety improvements we need, in our own communities, but we need your help.

I hope you will prioritize the safety of people even if they cannot afford a car. And I look forward to working with you on this bill. Thank you so much for your time. I am happy to take questions.

To clarify some opposition testimony: neither ORS 366.514 nor proposed SB 395 allow for spending money outside of the right of way. Any trails and footpaths funded by the 1% and the proposed 5% will be entirely within the street, road, and highway rights of way.

While footpaths alongside more highways will be developed, thus putting pedestrians and bicyclists potentially closer to some farms and forests, as Oregonians, we can address any conflicts, especially if farmers and landowners are consulted in the process: again, everyone should be able to move from place to place safely without having to own a car. A great example of coexistence between safe active transportation and farming activities adjacent to farmland is the separated bike/footpath along Hwy 99W between Rickreall and Monmouth/Independence.

Regarding the word "resurfaced" and the concerns around the cost, as raised by Rep. Evans: most road work in our county is resurfacing, rather than reconstruction, new construction, or relocation. This means that, in most circumstances, safe footpath construction is not required. Resurfacing triggering requirements to construct safe paths is the best way to add more paths more quickly: in our county, paths would be added rarely, since new construction is limited to work like the Newberg Dundee Bypass.

Thank you!

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