

Honorable members of the House Committee On Judiciary, Subcommittee On Civil Law,

I write in support of HB 2482, a well-crafted, narrowly tailored bill that will promote a more safe and equitable transit system for all Oregon residents and visitors.

Not paying a fare is an incredibly minor offense. Absent any other infraction, it is an entirely victimless offense. Mobility is good and we want folk to get where they're going--we especially want folk to get around in ways that keep cars off the roads. If a rider can't pay a fare, for any reason at all, it is still a net positive for society to have them get on the bus or train and get around. It keeps them out of a car, and it gets them where they need to go. Riding transit is not just neutral, it is good, and something we should encourage, even if a rider can't pay.

The presence of and engagement with an armed police officer is a threat of violence by the state, which makes many rightfully feel unsafe. I will admit that I do not feel unsafe around police officers, or at least haven't for most of my life. Growing up in a nearly all white neighborhood of Portland (my elementary school classes had between 0 and 2 Black students in them), I was socialized early to expect safety from police officers. I've never been harassed by an officer. But I need to remember and I hope you all do as well that not everyone has the privilege of feeling safe around the police. With good reason, many Oregonians understand the threat that is being made when an armed officer approaches them, regardless of circumstance.

Why would we allow a threat of violence against someone who is doing something good for Oregon, by getting on the bus or train? What does that say about our social stance towards mobility, towards poverty, towards people from vulnerable communities like Black riders, Indigenous riders, women riders, parent riders, children riders, trans and non-binary riders?

This bill prevents that. It ensures that in the process of fare enforcement, police officers won't be involved in the discovery of whether a rider has paid a fare. This is a common sense and focused restriction that transit agencies will have no problem complying with, and which will have an immediate positive impact on riders. The bill also clarifies certain laws to ensure that the act of entering a vehicle without paying a fare is not itself construed as a more serious infraction than it is, and that providing a name not on a government issued ID is not a more serious infraction than it is.

This bill then does nothing other than preventing municipalities and their police officers from harassing Oregon residents and visitors, without putting any burden on those municipalities or police officers. It is a good, narrowly tailored bill which should be passed and made a law.

Best,  
Thomas Craig  
Life-long resident of Portland  
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