

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward and Rayfield, and members of the committee,

My name is Emma DeFontes and I live in Tigard. As you consider how to balance the state budget and use federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, I ask you to please invest in green public transportation and clean energy projects in order to ensure the health, safety, and economic success of Oregon's young people.

As a 29-year-old Oregonian, I am extremely concerned about Oregon's economy and climate future. For the first time last year, my home was threatened by wildfires. Although my family ultimately did not have to evacuate, for the first time in my life, I was told to prepare for a possible evacuation. I was forced to stay indoors for weeks, not because of the coronavirus, but because of choking smoke. And all this just after I had returned home from years of living abroad! I did not come home to live in anxiety. This was not the beautiful Oregon that I had missed.

There is no doubt that the traumatic wildfires of last year were caused by climate change resulting from greenhouse gas emissions. To prevent these natural disasters from ravaging our state further, we must act to drastically reduce emissions. This is one reason why I ask that you fully fund Governor Brown's Oregon Climate Action Plan.

I also ask that you support the Oregon Department of Transportation to invest in transportation electrification, public transportation, and climate-smart transportation planning. Smart public transportation planning offers many benefits to Oregon's economy. Not only is it a sustainable source of long-term jobs, but it is a source of freedom, mobility, and economic opportunity for people like me who cannot afford a car or have no interest in owning a car. For instance, before I entered college, I was offered an internship in downtown Portland. My parents each used one of our family's two cars to commute to work, so I rode to my internship on the MAX line. In part because of the experience gained through that internship, I was able to enter college with a hefty scholarship and graduate debt-free.

There are only benefits to be gained from developing Oregon's public transportation system further. When I lived abroad, I lived in Japan, a nation with efficient and highly developed local and national public transportation systems. I cannot stress enough what a gift it was, economically and personally, to have access to such transportation while living in the Japanese countryside. I would love to see Oregon's transportation system developed to a similar level of sophistication and efficiency, for the sake of Oregon's economy and Oregonians' climate safety.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Emma DeFontes