

My name is Aaron Brown, and I'm a transportation and climate justice organizer based out of North Portland.

I am submitting testimony today to remind members of the Joint Committee of Transportation that, as of today, April 20th, the city of Portland Oregon has registered less than 0.1 inches of rain over the course of the month of April. Our seasonal average for the month of April is typically close to five inches. I grew up in Beaverton, and as someone with a May birthday, I have so many memories of childhood birthdays held indoors because of the inevitable rainstorms that reliably greeted the Willamette Valley every spring. If we're lucky, we'll have a couple wet weeks ahead that will get us at least somewhat close to our typical averages, at least closer to average than the historic, 1000 year drought that the rest of the American West is currently facing. It's horrific to consider the wildfires that might await us - how many more thousands of acres will be torched, how many more Oregon towns destroyed, homes burned, lives forever altered or lost.

Climate change is here. It's happening now. Every additional dry day this spring gives me all the more anxiety and fear about the wildfires that are ever more likely to hit this fall. The rising oceans, the droughts, the floods - all of these disasters seem to be all the more frequent, all the more destructive, all the more deadly with each passing year.

40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation.

The continued insistence that we can trust the Oregon Department of Transportation to build more freeways to get us out of congestion is literally contributing to an existential threat facing current and future generations of Oregonians and our way of life. Instead of making plans for camping trips this fall, my partner and I are stocking up on N95 masks and air filters. And let's be clear - the climate crisis is already disproportionately hurting the most vulnerable among us, in every corner of the state, rural or urban.

I support the oral and written testimony on this legislature written by Oregon Environmental Council, Verde, 1000 Friends of Oregon, private citizen Doug Allen, and others expressing skepticism that this legislation does not meet the moment and appropriately reckon with the urgent need to decarbonize our transportation system or provide funding for appropriate infrastructure. We are running out of time to address the climate crisis - and the Joint Committee on Transportation, with its management of the agency and budgets directly responsible for 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions, needs to act with the urgency this crisis represents. I'm all for finding ways to make sure that new electric vehicles pay their fair share on the roads that are used, but we simply must raise prices on the consumption of fossil fuels if we have any intention of reducing our carbon emissions. Doing so will also have a litany of significant benefits to public health in the form of reduced air pollution, which disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color who live next to busy roads, highways and freeways. Frontline communities across the state have provided endless testimony to local and state governments about how they wish to reform our transportation system with new funding mechanisms that can build the transportation infrastructure that meets this moment equitably and sustainability.

Please continue to legislate as though our house is on fire - because it is. and 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation. We are counting on your leadership.