

February 21, 2023

House Committee on Education
Re HB 3014-Support

Good morning, Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Jessica Fletcher and I live in St Johns, Portland, Oregon, along with my partner, Bryan, 2nd grader and soon to be kindergartener at James John Elementary. Our family has been working alongside a team of volunteers who are working to expand Active Transportation options for students and families at our school.

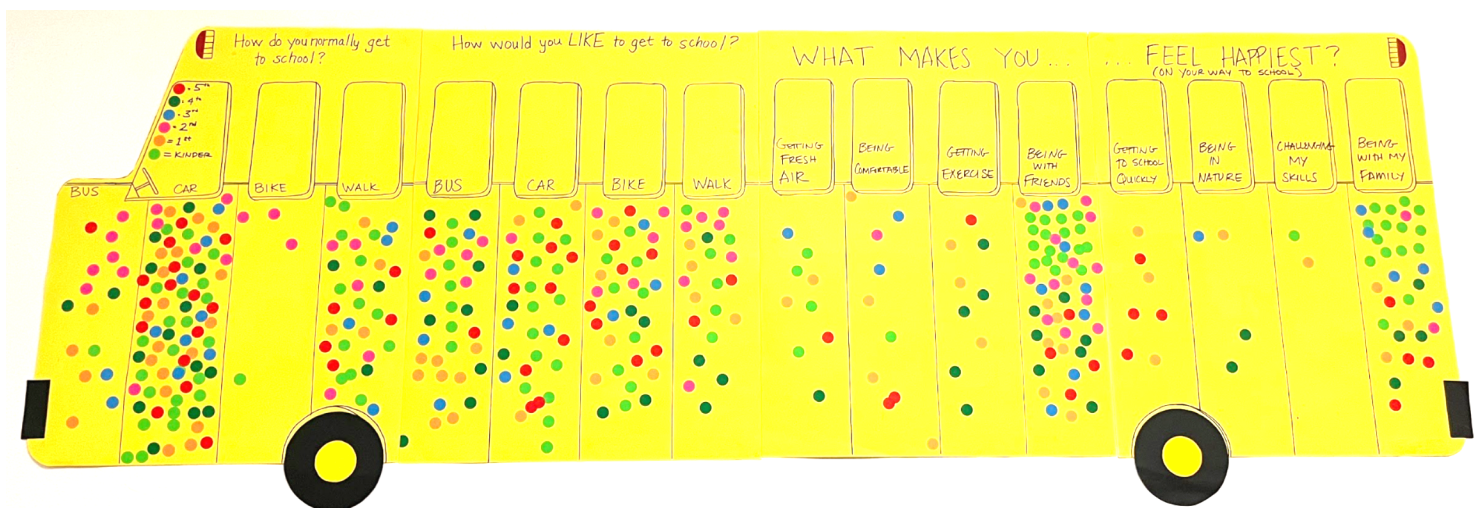
So far we have created 3 walking routes and 2 bike buses that run every Wednesday and a monthly Walk-n-Roll that include students who ride the bus, commute by car and those walking and biking to school.

I offer my strong support for HB 3014 for flexible school transportation funding for four reasons: equity, community health, wellbeing and our environment.

Equity. James John Elementary School is a diverse, Title 1 school located in the heart of downtown St. Johns. Our students have very few options to get to school safely. Only two school buses on the very outer boundary of our district serve 368 students. That leaves the majority of students no option but to drive, or bike and walk to school on high-traffic roads with few lights, crosswalks or signs.

Biking is the transportation option that James John students want. In a recent survey of 138 students, 61 percent of students indicated that they drive in a car to school. Half of those students, or close to 40 kids, indicated that they would prefer to bike instead. But bicycling and walking alone is not an option for most students and many families are not able to walk with students themselves.

Having the flexibility to pay bus leads would make participation possible for families who face income barriers who otherwise may not be able to commit to volunteering this time on a regular basis.



Community Health and Wellbeing. Walking and biking to school significantly contributes to students meeting the recommended 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity each day and has been shown to improve cognitive success for students. Families walking together or entrusting neighbors to walk their students has proven in our case to be a community bonding experience.

Environment. Students walking and biking to school reduces car congestion and carbon emissions.

Portland Public Schools Board of Education just passed a groundbreaking Climate Crisis Response Policy on March 1, 2022. It has been described as a, “sweeping climate policy that will direct district climate action around **emissions reductions, climate education, and climate justice** for the next three decades.”

The legislation, known as the "PPS Climate Crisis Response, Climate Justice, and Sustainable Practices Policy," directs the district to accomplish 3 primary objectives:

- Reduce environmental impacts by lowering district greenhouse gas emissions from building operations, **transportation**, and other sources.
- **Improve the health and wellness of students** and staff, and support frontline student communities to build resilience to climate change
- Teach our students about climate change, sustainability, and **climate justice**, with specific attention to helping students be **active participants in real life, community-based solutions.**

HB 3014 is a positive step in fulfilling all of PPS’s primary objectives. What if we could pay family members who don’t have the privilege to volunteer their time, to keep our students safe and offer a healthy alternative to driving in a car?

We can build on the momentum we have created, and support what our students want and what our environment needs.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 3014 so that students and families have healthy options and support in getting to school safely.

Sincerely,

Jessica Fletcher



Together we are making Active Transportation possible at our school!