



PROTECTING YOUR
RIGHT TO ROAM

Bike Bus Bill HB 3014
Letter of Support

February 22nd, 2023

To: House Committee on Education
From: Zachary Lauritzen, Interim Director at Oregon Walks
RE: Support for flexible school transportation funding, HB3014

Chair Neron, Vice-chairs Hudson and Wright, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Zachary Lauritzen and I am the interim director at Oregon Walks, a pedestrian advocacy organization based in Portland. It was an honor to testify at the hearing this week and I was thrilled to speak alongside such thoughtful advocates, especially so many young people who care deeply about their future. As testimony was limited, I wanted to take a moment to clarify a specific point that seems to be of confusion.

Our current transportation funding structure does not allow school districts to be reimbursed for transportation services provided to students living inside the so-called “walk zone” of one mile (elementary) or 1.5 miles (secondary). It may seem as though this bill would cause districts to increase spending on transportation services by implementing walking/biking buses and crossing guards. However, that is not the case! This bill *does not* allow districts to be reimbursed for transportation services for all students inside the walk zone.

What it does do, though, is tremendously benefit a specific demographic: students living fairly close to school (inside the walk zone) but where there are significant safety barriers, such as a major arterial road, in between their home and school. As you know, if significant barriers exist, then a district can apply for a supplemental waiver and be reimbursed for serving those students. Currently, school districts have only one tool: a bus. Buses are great! But they do not always meet the need.

One mother, Gwen, testified to this exact point. She described her child’s school—Marysville Elementary—located in southeast Portland just west of 82nd Avenue (a five lane, high speed arterial) that serves students who live on the east side of road. Dozens of those students live



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within four, six, or eight blocks of their school, but cannot walk to school because a young elementary student cannot safely cross this arterial road. All that is needed is a crossing guard or a walking school bus leader to help navigate 82nd Avenue. Currently, districts cannot be reimbursed for that crossing guard because it is not considered an allowable expense, so they are forced to use a bus (which is an allowable expense) rather than a more appropriate transportation support, like a crossing guard.

This bill would give districts more tools to meet the needs of their students and families, such as Gwen and her children.

What's more, crossing guards and walking/biking buses can often cost less *and* preserve jobs! Rather than a driver, this legislation would allow districts to hire a crossing guard or a walking school bus leader while saving money on gas, tires, oil changes, etc. This is the case of a rare win, win, win: it is good for kids, it is good for school budgets, and it is good for jobs.

There are myriad reasons to pass this legislation: positive health benefits of active transportation, academic improvements from physical exercise, congestion relief around schools, environmental benefits of fewer vehicles on the road, etc. And of great importance there is this: Simply put, with more options, school districts can better serve their students and families.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to be a resource to the committee if any questions arise.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zachary Lauritzen".

Zachary Lauritzen