

**Representative Susan McLain**

House District 29



Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

As a Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation, I have been working on the issue of transit safety for many years now, and I want to thank Senator Lieber for her work on SB 1553. I stand in strong support of the bill with the -1 amendment. This bill would apply the crime of Interfering with Public Transportation to the use of illicit drugs on public transit. The bill is necessary to ensure public transit feels safe for everyone.

Oregonians across the state depend on various types of public transit to get to work, school, stores, medical appointments, and other daily life tasks. We are all well aware that there has been a decline in ridership for a variety of reasons, but one important reason is that people clearly do not feel as safe as they once did using public transit. A recent TriMet survey shows over a 30% drop in riders feeling safe on buses and trains over the past several years. And this is not just a Portland issue: I have heard the concerns raised in Eugene, Medford, and various other jurisdictions across the state. In fact, multiple transit agencies have had to double their security workforces over the past several years.

The Joint Transportation Committee has been working tirelessly to invest in and support public transit as part of our multimodal system. To reduce emissions and reach our statewide climate goals, we must provide increased opportunities for people to use public transit and address any obstacles that may stand in the way of expanding ridership.

In addition, our public transit employees deserve a safe working environment, and with the expansion of our multimodal system, we need to recruit new drivers to address the workforce shortage. Ensuring a safe workplace is the critical first step to recruiting and retaining our transit workforce.

We need safety in all our public spaces, and we must encourage public transit at all opportunities. I strongly believe that this bill is a critical step to recovering and increasing ridership, and I encourage you to vote yes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan McLain".

Representative Susan McLain