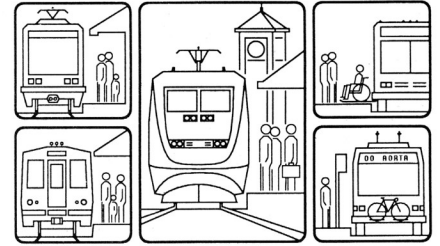


Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

AORTA

P.O. Box 2772, Portland, Oregon 97208-2772
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Date: March 4, 2025
To: Joint Committee on Transportation
Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 3362

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

AORTA-Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization seeking to educate decision-makers and the public about the need for and advantages of safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation since 1976. AORTA promotes increased reliance on rail for both passengers and freight, and supports improved public transportation in general.

AORTA and its members urge you to support HB 3362 to address some of the harms of tire particles. By incurring a modest 4% tax on the retail price of car tires, the proceeds of the tax will help to fund mitigation of pollutants to fisheries, support wildlife crossings of highways, and help fund Passenger Rail transit. We are talking about less than the cost of a single tank of gas every four years, for most drivers buying a set of four new tires.

While air pollution from tailpipes is a common concern, much less has been discussed about emissions and pollution from car tires. Tailpipe emissions have been trending downward due to cleaner burning engines and increasing electrification. However, the amounts of tire particles released while driving are increasing due to the increased size and weight of vehicles.

The health impacts of tire particles as a source of both air and water pollution, are well studied. According to researchers in the United Kingdom, car tires produce more than 2,000 times the amount of particulate air pollution than from vehicle tailpipes¹. Emissions Analytics, a British firm which has spent three years studying tire emissions, found that a car's four tires collectively emit 1 trillion ultrafine particles (of less than 100 nanometers) per kilometer driven. These ultrafine particles can penetrate through the lungs into the bloodstream, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, and asthma in children.

Tire particles also release harmful chemicals into our waterways. 6PPD and 6PPD-q are chemicals released by car tires with known links to "Urban runoff mortality syndrome" (URMS), where adult salmon returning to spawn in freshwater concurrent with stormwater exposure suffer significant mortality events. According to researchers, "In the most urbanized watersheds with extensive impervious surfaces, 40 to 90% of returning salmon may die before spawning."²

Tire particles are also a major source of microplastics, plastic fragments up to 5 millimeters long, which are a dangerous source of pollutants for humans. Scientists from the University of California, San Francisco, found that exposure to

¹ Carrington, Damian. "Car tyres produce vastly more particle pollution than exhausts, tests show," The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/03/car-tyres-produce-more-particle-pollution-than-exhausts-tests-show>

² B. E. Feist, E. R. Buhle, D. H. Baldwin, J. A. Spromberg, S. E. Damm, J. W. Davis, N. L. Scholz, Roads to ruin: Conservation threats to a sentinel species across an urban gradient. *Ecol. Appl.* 27, 2382–2396 (2017).

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/4111834/Feist-Et-Al-Pre-Print-2017.pdf>

microplastics is suspected to harm reproductive, digestive, and respiratory health and may be linked to colon and lung cancer³. Research from the Pew Charitable Trust found that 78% of the microplastics in the ocean are from car tires⁴.

HB 3362 will help to fund cleaner and more sustainable transportation options for Oregonians to reduce tire particles. As noted, vehicles that are heavier and are driven more aggressively shed more tire particles due to increased tire-road friction. Ensuring that all road users pay into the tax, regardless of Gross-Vehicle Weight, would best help mitigate some of the social and environmental externalities that are currently subsidized at the expense of the declining health of neighbors and our fisheries.

Funding for Passenger Rail is critical to maintaining and expanding the Amtrak Cascades, the popular rail service between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia. In 2023 and in 2024 ridership broke all-time records, up 41% year over year. The Cascades service offers a clean, safe, and "hands-free" ride for travelers of many different means, including students, people on business trips, and families.

The additional benefits that investing in rail across the state could bring should not be understated. One train of double-stacked containers takes 280 trucks off the road, reducing wear and tear on our highways. A double-tracked railway could handle over 30,000 passengers per hour, compared to the current four-lane cross section of I-5, which can only handle 6,000 people per hour⁵. Train speeds in the US can also far exceed safe automobile driving speeds, with both the Acela and Lincoln Service between Chicago and St. Louis regularly exceeding 100 MPH for significant portions of their journeys. Investments in rail benefit everyone: freight movement, passengers, those who need to drive, and trucking companies.

Passenger Rail and public transit provide opportunities for Oregonians to reduce their living expenses. While housing costs are going up, the costs of transportation are also increasing. According to AAA-Oregon, over the first five years after purchasing a new car, the average person spends over \$10,000 per year on car payments, insurance, fuel, and depreciation of their vehicle⁶. Furthermore, the cost of the average new vehicle and gasoline may go up due to tariffs. Offering alternatives to driving allows Oregonians to avoid subsidizing out-of-state manufacturers and big-oil executives, and to spend more money directly in their communities.

HB 3362 is about providing choices and opportunities, not forcing people out of their cars. We strongly urge your YES vote for House Bill 3362.

Sincerely,

Douglas R. Allen, Vice-President
AORTA-Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates
www.aortarail.org

³ "Whats the deal with microplastics?", Stanford Report. <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2025/01/what-s-the-deal-with-microplastics-the-material-that-never-goes-away>

⁴"Breaking the Plastic Wave: a comprehensive assessment of pathways towards stopping ocean plastic pollution," University of Oxford. https://www.systemiq.earth/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BreakingThePlasticWave_MainReport.pdf

⁵ "Appendix 3: Characteristics of Light Rail, Tram, and Other Modes", Select Committee on Transport, Parliament of the United Kingdom (2005). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmtran/378/378we65.htm>

⁶ "Annual cost of new car ownership exceeds 10K," AAA. <https://info.oregon.aaa.com/aaa-annual-cost-of-new-car-ownership-exceeds-10k/>