

Submitter: Kevin Kincaid
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1202
Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 1202. In order to best serve the transportation needs of the 21st century, Oregon needs to develop a strong transit network. To mitigate climate change, Oregon needs to move away from emission producing car infrastructure, and shift towards efficient and reliable public transportation. ODOT has shown that it's top funding priority is highway expansions, even at the detriment of transit and road maintenance. In creating the Oregon Rail and Transit Department, Oregon will have an agency whose sole focus is on building the public transit network this state deserves.

Despite years of evidence demonstrating that highway expansions do not work, ODOT has continued to focus its efforts on building the oversized rose quarter expansion instead of any transit infrastructure. They plan to start building that mega project this summer despite half a billion in current funding depending on the whim of the presidential administration. Even with that money they are hundreds of millions short of their own total project cost estimate. They have shifted money between the I-205 expansion and this project repeatedly in order to get 1 emission-causing project built. At the same time, ODOT is having to make significant cuts to their road maintenance budget. Why the agency is determined to add more lanes it will have to maintain when it cannot take care of the roads it currently has, I do not know. ODOT's spending needs to be reigned in to focus on the true priorities.

Since ODOT is already so car focused, the Oregon Rail and Transit Department should be created and tasked with building our transit infrastructure to the level Oregon deserves. Now, this agency needs to be aggressive, and be specifically tasked with materially improving frequency and coverage of the public transit systems in Oregon. Amtrak Cascades ridership is at an all time high and should receive addition frequency. Much of Oregon is losing access to private intercity bus routes, and providing effective bus transportation could reduce car congestion in several different places. Additionally, we need an agency to assist and support local transit agencies and give them the resources and funding needed.

Of course, none of this matters if the new department is not given adequate funding. The transportation package is an ongoing development, and certain funds are dedicated for transit, such as the HB3362 tax. I would encourage legislators to further increase the funding for transit raised by the STIF to at least 0.3%, and make sure that transit receives the necessary resources. I encourage you to pass SB 1202.

Thank you for your time.