

Submitter: Matthew Alexander
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1202

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

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 1202, to create an Oregon Department of Rail and Transit.

Expanded access to rail transit is a necessary tool in Oregon's fight against greenhouse gas emissions and the fatalities caused by driving (7.28 deaths per billion passenger-miles for 'cars or light trucks' compared to 0.24 - 0.43 deaths per billion passenger-miles for 'urban mass transit rail' or 'commuter rail and Amtrak'). Please provide this department with the dedicated funding that it needs to thrive, or at least a mechanism by which it can generate sufficient revenue to improve our existing rail system or expand service. I would propose that the STIF payroll tax should be increased from 0.1% to 0.5% for this purpose. An increase from 0.1% to 0.4% is already projected to be necessary to prevent a 30% decrease in transit service across the state due to increasing costs. Payroll taxes are not highly salient or controversial like some other taxes, and the usage of these funds is already highly progressive it benefits those in our state who are able to access the least (the 1/3rd of Oregonians who are unable to drive).

Thank you.