

**KHANH PHAM  
STATE SENATOR  
DISTRICT 23**



**Date:** April 8, 2025  
**To:** Joint Committee on Transportation  
**From:** Senator Khanh Pham  
**Re:** **Support for Senate Bill 1202**

Thank you, Co-Chairs and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Senator Khanh Pham, representing District 23 in Southeast and Northeast Portland. I'm honored to introduce Senate Bill 1202 with Senator Gorsek, which would establish Oregon's first State Rail and Transit Department.

Over the past year, I've had the honor of listening to Oregonians from Portland to Medford and from Tillamook to Ontario. What I heard, again and again, was the vital need for reliable, affordable, and accessible Rail and public transit—especially for youth, elders, people with disabilities, veterans, and working families. Rail and Transit isn't just a convenience—it's a lifeline.

And yet, we know that our current approach has real limitations. While I appreciate the work of the small team at ODOT who work on transit and rail, the agency's core mission and the vast majority of their work is really focused on roads and bridges. As a result, transit and rail too often fall through the cracks—not because of a lack of support but because of competing priorities.

There is precedent for what we are proposing. Just 25 years ago, the Legislature created the Oregon Department of Aviation to ensure that airports—large and small—received the focused policy leadership and investment they needed. Today, that agency plays a key role in economic connectivity, wildfire readiness, and future technologies. It's reasonable to ask: what would it mean for Oregon if we made a similar commitment to bus, train, and rail service?

SB 1202 offers us a chance to start that conversation—to envision a future where transit systems are more integrated, where Oregon competes more effectively for federal rail funding, and where we plan for growth with equity, livability, and climate resilience in mind.

As we begin this conversation, I invite us to imagine what's possible. How can we build a more coordinated transit system across the state and region? How can a state agency provide better oversight and support for our local transit districts? How can freight rail become a more powerful engine for rural economic development?

These are the kinds of questions we can begin to explore together. I'm grateful for the opportunity to help start that conversation today.

As we look ahead, we must plan for a future where more Oregonians move by mass transit—not just because it's necessary, but because it's the smart thing to do. I look forward to the testimony we'll hear today and to the ongoing dialogue this bill will help spark. Thank you.