



Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 5520, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) budget. I am writing on behalf of the Climate Reality Project (CRP) Portland Chapter. We are local, volunteer-led, and advocate for sustainable solutions to the climate crisis via a just transition to clean energy, zero carbon transportation, climate justice, green communities, and a fair, representative democracy.

CRP Portland Chapter sees that climate impacts and pollution already have real and harmful consequences for Oregon families, our economy, and our environment, and knows from the science that these impacts will only get worse unless we implement just solutions now. We therefore strongly support funding to reduce emissions and protect Oregon communities on the frontline of climate impacts. With the federal government decimating climate and environmental justice protections, it is more important than ever for Oregon to fully fund DEQ's mission to be a leader in restoring, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land and water.

Transitioning to battery-electric vehicles is an essential part of that mission. Therefore, we strongly support:

1. Reinvesting the requested \$12 million in **Oregon Clean Vehicle Rebate Program / Charge Ahead** program, which lowers the upfront costs for Oregonians to purchase electric vehicles. This fund has been consistently oversubscribed because Oregonians want the cleaner air, better health, and lower fueling and maintenance costs that EVs provide.
2. Including funding for **electric bicycle rebates** as set out in HB 2963. This will increase equitable access and cost-savings for lower income Oregonians *and* help ease Department of Transportation maintenance costs. Did you know that **64,000** bicycle trips can be taken before they create the same wear and tear on a road as **one** car trip?
3. Funding **Medium and Heavy Duty Electric Vehicle Rebates & Infrastructure Grants** to lower the health and climate burden of trucking: Every diesel truck replaced by an electric truck chips away at the estimated 176 premature deaths, 25,910 lost work days and annual costs from exposure of \$3.5 billion that diesel exhaust currently causes.

We additionally encourage you and DEQ to emphasize the need for a smart transition to battery electric MHDVs even though "zero emissions" vehicles currently include fuel-cell hydrogen vehicles under Oregon statute because:

- 1) The production of hydrogen often has extremely high emissions.
- 2) Fuel-cell hydrogen vehicles are much less efficient than battery-electric vehicles.

- 3) Direct electrification of medium and heavy duty vehicles is already possible.
- 4) The ODOE 2025 energy strategy technical report determined that electrification, not hydrogen, is the pathway of choice even for most medium and heavy duty vehicles (MHDV). We hope that Oregon DEQ will work with ODOE to make that smart transition a reality.

Because there is no climate or environmental justice protection without the staff and resources to evaluate conditions, proposals, and progress towards goals, we also urge you to fund support of POPs #111 and #170, which will support funding for Oregon's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program and address Critical Resource Gaps to address resource deficiencies and chronic underfunding affecting critical agency services and functions as highlighted in a 2024 Secretary of State audit.

Thank you for the opportunity to emphasize these priorities for a healthier, more secure Oregon.  
Helena Birecki  
Interim Chair, Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter

**Endnotes:**

[Making hydrogen work for the energy transition](#) joint report from Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter, Green Energy Institute, Beyond Toxics, and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

[Oregon Energy Strategy Technical Report](#) page 40. Hydrogen is included in the category of "clean fuels" in this report.

[The Relationship between Vehicle Weight, Road Damage, and You](#) Road wear and tear calculations based on a bicycle+rider weight of 200 pounds and a car+rider weight of 4000 pounds (which would be slightly lighter than the [average US car](#)).

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About The Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter

The Climate Reality Project (CRP) Portland Chapter is a local, volunteer-led chapter of The Climate Reality Project, an international nonprofit of 5 million members led by climate leader and former US Vice President Al Gore, whose mission is to catalyze global solutions to the climate crisis. Our legislative committee bases its advocacy on CRP's 5 pillars: a just transition to clean energy, zero carbon transportation, climate justice and public health, green communities, and a fair, representative democracy. [climaterealitypdx.com/](https://climaterealitypdx.com/), [www.climaterealityproject.org](https://www.climaterealityproject.org)