



PLACE INITIATIVE

PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP ADVOCATING FOR CLIMATE & EQUITY

June 9, 2025

HB 2025: Transportation Package

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Garlynn Woodsong; I'm the Executive Director of PLACE Initiative; we are headquartered in, and I live in, Portland, Oregon. PLACE Initiative works for climate action with equitable outcomes, to achieve people-centric solutions to the climate-driven challenges of our future.

I'm testifying today to urge you to amend HB 2025 to increase investment in Oregon Community Paths via the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund.

In 2022-2023, Oregon Trails Coalition led a robust, statewide stakeholder engagement process, called the Oregon Signature Trails Inventory, to determine what long distance trails were most ripe for investment due to their importance to local communities and Oregonians across the state. Across all of the regional listening sessions, they heard more love for the Oregon Coast Trail vision than any other single trail, though the outpouring of demand for trails in general across the state was amazing. A huge amount of work has gone into planning and gap analysis for trails in recent years, and it is critical that the state invests in moving the vision for a completed Oregon Community Paths Network forward.

Oregon Community Paths funds grants for project development, construction, reconstruction, major resurfacing or other improvements of multi-use paths that improve access and safety for people walking and bicycling. This program is used to fund the off-street portions of Safe Routes to School projects as well as access to parks, transit centers, and alternatives to high-speed roadways. It is especially critical in rural communities, where off-street paths are frequently the only alternative to walking, running, or biking on the state highway system. The program was oversubscribed by more than 4:1 in its first two funding cycles. We are asking that a very small portion of the new funding identified in the transportation package be allocated to this program through the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund which exclusively funds the Oregon Community Paths program. We celebrate the proposed investments already identified in the package for on-street safety through Safe Routes to School and Great Streets.

Why Funding Trails Matters:

- More than **80% of Oregonians report using local trails or off-street paths**, and there is broad public support for investing in trails.
- **Safety:** Off-street paths provide the safest alternatives to walking or riding on high-speed and high-traffic roadways, and ODOT's Oregon Community Paths program is a critical tool alongside Great Streets and Safe Routes to School, in addressing the epidemic of traffic fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways.
- **Economic Impact:** In addition to saving lives and healthcare system costs, off-street paths are extremely valuable visitor amenities and support Oregon's outdoor recreation and tourism economies and the economic vitality of Oregon communities. While we lack Oregon-specific data on trails Return On Investment, the ROI of significant trail investments nationwide is well-documented.

- **Leverage Federal Funds:** Oregon Community Paths program provides one of the only sources of matching funds for the state and for local governments to leverage federal funding for trail projects in Oregon.

Further, our nationwide policy work on how to engage in climate action that will deliver equitable outcomes shows us that trails must be the backbone of transportation strategy for climate action; electric cars and solar panels alone won't cut it. Oregon should take the lead in this area with a significant downpayment on trails investments in the 2025 Transportation Package, by committing \$100 million to statewide trail development annually through the lifetime of this package.

Thank you for your leadership,

Garlynn G. Woodsong



Executive Director, PLACE Initiative

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