

Submitter: Ben Hedstrom

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Hedstrom, and I live in SE Portland, Foster Powell neighborhood. I'm testifying today to urge you to amend HB 2025 to increase investment in Oregon Community Paths via the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund. My family use trails to get to work, school and recreate.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Will you share your support with your colleagues on the Joint Transportation Committee and in leadership for amending HB 2025 to direct a small portion of new revenue to off-street trails via the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund?

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.

Sincerley,

Ben Hedstrom