

Submitter:

Lauren La Riva

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren La Riva, and I live in Portland. I'm here today to support House Bill 2025 because I want safer streets for my family and my community. These programs are lifelines, funding safe crossings, sidewalks, lighting, and bikeways that connect people to schools, jobs, transit, and community. Without this funding, too many Oregonians, especially children, seniors, and people with disabilities, are forced to travel dangerous roads every day. We've witnessed too many close calls happen to neighbors, and as parents of a young child we want to ensure that all children in Oregon have safe sidewalks to get to school and to get around their communities.

As a disabled person myself who often relies on a wheelchair to get around, my husband and I have experienced the impact of the lack of sidewalks in certain areas, as well as poorly maintained sidewalks and curb cut ramps that are too steep to easily navigate as a wheelchair user. If the sidewalk curb cut ramps are too steep, it's difficult for me to push myself up the ramp without help from someone pushing me, so without my husband to help me, I would be unable to get out of the street to the sidewalk on my own in my wheelchair. Even with my husband to help push me in my wheelchair, we've found overly steep curb cut ramps often scrape the underside of my wheelchair's footrests, risking damage to a mobility aid I rely on to get around on a daily basis. Cracked sidewalks and potholes in the crosswalks also present hazards and obstacles for disabled Oregonians like myself trying to get around our communities. Investments in ADA-compliant sidewalks, off-street paths, and protected bike lanes ease traffic and improve safety for everyone, including drivers. As a disabled Latina mother currently supporting my family paycheck-to-paycheck, I'm also concerned that the current version of the package adds nearly a dozen new fees and taxes, costs that fall hardest on low-income, rural, and BIPOC communities already facing unfair burdens. There's a better way to pay for transportation. We're glad to hear lawmakers are thinking about higher fees for luxury cars. We support more ideas like this, where those who can afford it the most help invest in strong, healthy communities for everyone. We need to expand transportation choices while keeping costs down for working families like ours and people with low and fixed incomes.

Currently, the package lacks clear investments that address climate change and air pollution. Without clear investments, the package likely makes the climate crisis worse and Oregon's transportation package risks increasing pollution, deaths, and injuries, while leaving our communities behind. Lawmakers must address these pressing issues to protect the environment so that all Oregonians can enjoy our beautiful state for years to come.

Our transportation system has big gaps that limit some people more than others. People with disabilities, rural families, people of color, and working folks have the greatest need for affordable transportation. If we don't put these communities first in our solutions, they'll fall even further behind. Oregon lacks sufficient intercity transportation options. By investing in passenger rail, we increase accessibility between cities and give Oregonians more choice in how they move. Rail travel is one of the safest, most sustainable, and reliable transportation options available across the world and in Oregon. Passengers can easily bring pets, bicycles, mobility devices, and more onto passenger trains. Tourism would also benefit greatly. Finally, while I fully support on-street safety investments, they often lead nowhere if we don't also fund off-street connections. That is why I urge you to include funding for the Oregon Community Paths program to create a complete and connected network. I urge you to support HB 2025 and fully fund these life-saving programs.

Sincerely,

Lauren La Riva