

Submitter:

Bob Rossi

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

For more than 125 years people in the western states have been debating what communities, and particularly urban environments, should look like and how they should function. Playgrounds were considered radical innovations into the 1930s. We now have a compelling need to create low-cost housing and center wrap-around services for the marginalized and the elderly and for young families. This is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. As a working-class senior citizen I need a safe environment that provides me the means to get my shopping done, get to my healthcare providers, and interact with others in order to avoid isolation. I find almost every day that drivers speed through intersections without regard to stop signs and lights and that more people are driving without tags and even license plates. I also find that greenspace and community centers and churches tend to be in wealthier neighborhoods. And it seems remarkable to me that stores in wealthier neighborhoods sell better produce and have more healthy food options, and even different newspapers, than stores in my neighborhood do. I worry about what will happen when I can no longer drive or when my luck will run out and someone hits me as they disregard a traffic light or stop sign. I know that these reasonable fears and observations are shared by others. The solutions may be costly, but investing in people and community always pays off in the long run. More bike lines, more mass transit, more greenspace and playgrounds in low-income areas, more specialized transport for the disabled, a rail system that connects the Willamette Valley to the coast and to Portland, support for Amtrak across the state, the return of companies doing the work once done by Greyhound and Trailways, and timely road maintenance by ODOT are solid job- and community-creating investments that open the door to more small businesses and force local and county governments to working together rather than compete. Every major street in my town needs turn lanes, and I expect that this is true elsewhere. I suspect also that diesel emissions are much higher in my community than they are in wealthier areas. I suspect that more people in my neighborhood are getting the AK modifications made to their cars than in wealthier neighborhoods. Turn lanes, emissions, noisy and frightening vehicles, and reasonable and just enforcement of vehicle safety laws and pedestrian rights needs to be an essential part of the picture as well. I come from an area of the country where roads are not maintained and where there is no real support for pedestrian paths and bicycles and where driving while intoxicated is part of the lifestyle for many of us---and while my home dearly, I hesitate to move back because older people there are more isolated and live shorter lives than older people here do.