

Submitter: Zachary Leshar

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

My name is Zach, and I have lived car-free for my entire adult life. This freedom from the second-largest expense for most Americans has allowed me to pursue things in life that I wouldn't be able to afford otherwise: returning to school full-time, leaving a job to work full-time on a portfolio to find the job of my dreams, among other things. I moved to Portland, and Oregon more generally, because I hoped it would be someplace I could remain car free without major trade-offs to my personal safety.

I love Portland, and I want to see it succeed. I believe strongly that the city can attract foot traffic downtown again, can see population growth, can improve livability, and can show residents the value of the tax dollars we pay.

To this end, there are many things in this bill I am excited about-- public transportation investments and better funding for safe routes to school, for instance. These things provide more transportation options for all of us, and promote efficient use of space and active, healthy communities.

On the other hand, the continued investment in highway megaprojects in the Portland region continues to bewilder me. Why we would invest in roads that make it easier to move to Southwest Washington while exposing children in North Portland to higher emissions, at the expense of so many other places in the state that could benefit from investments in rail and pedestrian safety in a state that so often touts its commitments to fighting climate change is beyond me. Furthermore, locking in car dependence is deeply expensive, and will prevent many others in the Portland region from benefitting from the same opportunities I have enjoyed.

I encourage you to put more guardrails on ODOT's use of transportation dollars to ensure that they are accountable, and to support a fix-it-first approach to roadways rather than continuing to give ODOT a blank check to continue throwing money at freeway projects in Portland indefinitely.