

Submitter: Jess Howell

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

"Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek, Vice Chairs Boshart-Davis and Starr, and members of the committee:

My name is Jessica Howell, and I live in Coos County, a rural community on Oregon's South Coast. I'm testifying today because I support a 2025 transportation package that works for all Oregonians and reflects our shared values of safety, affordability, equity, and climate resilience. In particular, I urge you to fully fund Safe Routes to School, public transit, and rural mobility investments—programs that directly improve the health and safety of underserved communities.

Oregon's communities need a better transportation system that is healthy, affordable, accessible and safe. Imagine an Oregon where we all have the freedom to choose how we get to work, school, or the doctor without risking our safety. Where kids in rural towns can get to school reliably even when it's too far to walk. Where seniors can attend appointments without being dependent on a car. Where you don't need to own a vehicle just to meet basic needs. Relatively small investments now can have huge payouts in getting all Oregonians where they need to go—while boosting our economy, protecting our environment, and strengthening public health.

It's essential to pass a transportation package that:

- Invests deeply in public transit, especially in communities where there is little to no accessibility
- Funds safety first, so rural roads, tribal areas, and low-income neighborhoods aren't left behind.

As a community advocate, I see firsthand how lack of transportation isolates people—especially the most vulnerable such as youth, elders, disabled folks, Black and Indigenous People of Color and low-income families. In our area, there are children walking on shoulderless roads to get to school or the bus stop. There are unhoused neighbors trying to get to services or job interviews with no safe paths or buses. There are families who lose access to healthcare over the summer because they can't get to the school based health center. Cuts or underfunding force impossible choices.

If we're going to ask Oregonians to pay more, we have an obligation to ensure the outcomes reflect our values. That means:

- Improving health and safety by funding popular but underfunded programs like Safe Routes to School, Great Streets, and Oregon Community Paths;
- Lowering household costs for working families through fare-free youth transit and expanded non-driving transportation options.

We can't afford to wait. Let's build a future where every Oregonian—regardless of ZIP code, income, or identity—has access to safe, reliable, and sustainable

transportation. I urge you to pass a transportation package that truly moves Oregon forward, together.

Sincerely,

Jess Howell, JEDIA Coordinator

South Coast Health Equity Coalition serving Coos and Curry County, Oregon