

Good evening, Co-Chair Gorsek and Co-Chair McLain and members of the committee. My name is Bill Bradley, and I am here today to express ATU 757's strong support for House Bill 2025.

HB 2025 represents a critical investment in the future of public transit across Oregon. This bill proposes a modest yet vital increase to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) tax, phasing it from 0.1% to 0.3% of payroll over three biennia. This isn't just about maintaining the status quo; it's about safeguarding essential services and allowing our transit agencies to continue the incredible work they've been doing.

Public transit agencies are facing the looming threat of steep service cuts, potential loss of entire routes, and even the elimination of full days of service. And this is without considering any changes from Washington D.C. This uncertainty hinders their ability to plan, grow, and serve our communities effectively. HB 2025 provides the stability needed to avert these drastic measures.

ATU has worked tirelessly with transit agencies to rebuild service in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are now seeing the tangible fruits of that dedication. Agencies have successfully hired bus operators to acceptable levels, meaning routes no longer need to be cancelled due to staffing shortages. Furthermore, ATU and transit agencies across the state have collaborated on innovative workforce development initiatives, creating high-road training partnerships to bring in the next generation of skilled technicians.

These are significant investments of time, effort, and resources. If we are able to stay the course, thanks to the increased and stable funding provided by HB 2025, Oregon will undoubtedly see a substantial return on these vital investments.

Ultimately, our state's transportation system functions best when Oregonians have viable options. HB 2025 ensures that public transit remains a truly viable option, particularly as an alternative to owning a second car. Consider this: the average cost of car ownership, according to AAA, is over \$12,000 per year. The phased increase in the STIF tax, at its conclusion, would amount to roughly \$160 per median Oregon household annually. This is a small price to pay for the immense benefits public transit provides.

We know the public overwhelmingly supports this. Over 60% of the comments received during the summer Transportation Roadshow were explicitly in favor of increasing transit funding. Oregonians understand that transit makes our roads safer and less congested. It empowers our seniors to age in place with dignity and independence, and it allows young people to pursue employment and education without the significant burden of a car payment or costly maintenance.

I urge you to pass HB 2025. It's a fiscally responsible, publicly supported, and forward-thinking and will strengthen our communities, enhance our economy, and improve the quality of life for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.