

President, Vice President and Committee Members.

My name is ALILI C. VERDUZCO, and I am a member of the Hillsboro, Oregon community in Washington County. I am a concerned mother and wife who also serves on the Hillsboro Parent Advisory Board and has served on local environmental and transportation improvement committees.

I am 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.

I am speaking out on the issues affecting our community with special needs, such as wheelchair users, motorists, and public transit bus ridership.

The sidewalks, which have been in poor condition for years, have uneven surfaces that make transportation difficult for people in non-motorized wheelchairs. These sidewalks, apart from being dangerous, are practically impossible to navigate for someone maneuvering their wheelchair with only their hands. The risk of falling or being thrown from their chair is very high. We end up using the streets for transportation, creating a danger for people in wheelchairs, bicycles, and pedestrians.

The risk and fear of those using or pushing a wheelchair is constant, along with the fear of using the road to avoid such a risky uneven surface on the sidewalks, since they can end up being run over when simply going out for a walk or shopping. This greatly limits the community's ability to freely and safely go out on the streets and use the sidewalks. Another problem is that the sidewalks don't have accessible wheelchair ramps. I've struggled to get off the bus with my husband's wheelchair. I couldn't get his wheelchair off the bus because some stops don't have ramps, and others aren't well-built.

For months, I've had to use sidewalks and public transportation with my husband in a wheelchair, and due to their poor infrastructure, I almost threw him out of the chair.

Also, buses need more space so that passengers we transport, or those who use wheelchairs, can maneuver chairs when entering and exiting the bus.

Like me, there are many more families across Oregon who are going through this difficult time and need urgent improvements to sidewalks, streets, and public transportation. We must prevent the risks faced by children, youth, and adults. Our streets should and can be made safer for wheelchair users, cyclists, and motorists alike. By improving sidewalks at their intersections, specifically with ramp-style curbs and not significant drops, or by adding bicycle lanes on all streets suitable for people with disabilities. We should also consider the future acquisition of buses with more space for wheelchairs, especially when entering and/or exiting buses.

The disability community and I greatly value being able to be seen and supported by having ramp-style curb fills at curb intersections and/or increasing bicycle lanes on all streets. This will promote exercise, health, and general participation among the population. It will also eliminate the fear that discourages people from going out for outdoor activities or using sidewalks when going to or from errands or school, without having to request special transportation to take them there and back. Given the above, I wonder how likely it is that our competent authorities in charge can work on this request? I firmly believe it is possible to achieve this with your support and willingness, for which I greatly appreciate the value you, as authorities, place on the voices of the community you honorably and proudly represent and for whom you have the honor of working.

The bill includes significant funding for popular traffic safety programs that Oregonians have demanded. However, funding is currently lacking for off-street networks and trails that connect Oregonians to schools, work, and public transportation. This investment is critical for rural safety, access, and mobility. By prioritizing public transportation, sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and safety-focused crosswalks, we create vibrant and resilient neighborhoods where people can live, work, and enjoy themselves without fear.

It is urgent that you support this proposal. Thank you very much for your time.

Attached are photos of the problems observed and continually experienced.

