

Submitter: Peter Fargo  
On Behalf Of: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
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 Joint Committee:

My name is Peter Fargo, I live in rural Baker City, Oregon, I am testifying on behalf of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO).

I would like to begin by saying THANK YOU for your service and for your work on HB 2025. This transportation bill affects all Oregonians, and EMO appreciates the time and care you have invested in meeting our State's transportation needs.

As a member of the Move Oregon Forward coalition, EMO is advocating for a transportation system that reflects our shared values of safety, equity, climate resilience, and affordability. While HB 2025 is a significant improvement over the previous version, some critical provisions are still lacking. For example:

- \* There is still no funding for electric vehicle charging stations.
- \* There is still inadequate funding to increase public transit, which is essential for 30 percent of Oregon's population, especially in rural areas and for those with disabilities. We do, however, appreciate HB 2025 commitments to passenger rail and efforts to align with the goals of AORTA. (For example, as an eastern Oregonian, re-establishing the Pioneer Line from Boise to Portland is an exciting prospect to further connect our rural communities with the rest of the State.)
- \* ODOT should be required to evaluate the projected greenhouse gas emissions for all future highway projects and mitigate any increased emissions.
- \* Funding needs to be included to transition to non-polluting electric school buses.

Additionally, we would like to flag a need that is not yet addressed by this bill -- railroad Quiet Zones.

Persistent train horn noise up to 110 decibels is medically proven to harm human health, including sleep interruption, chronic stress, and cardiovascular disease. With every train blasting four horns on the approach to every at-grade railroad crossing in Oregon, the impacts on community health, livability, and economic prosperity are staggering. In my own community of Baker City, in eastern Oregon, my daughter's elementary school is adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, and kids on the playground receive point-blank train horn blasts. Studies show an impact on educational attainment and stress in students that are exposed to this level of noise pollution. With four horns at each crossing, six railroad crossings in town, an average

of 25 trains per day, our low-income community endures hundreds of horns blasts day and night. For these reasons, Baker City has been pursuing a Quiet Zone for six years, but Union Pacific Railroad has continued to add complexity and cost to the process, keeping our community's goal out of reach.

This is a severe environmental and economic injustice. Communities like Baker City need assistance from the State of Oregon to achieve and sustain Quiet Zone status. We recommend a moderate investment to (1) assess the needs of communities across Oregon and (2) provide direct support to help communities successfully complete the Quiet Zone process:

- (a) an ODOT team dedicated to providing coordination, communication, technical support, and advocacy for local communities with limited capacity to navigate the Quiet Zone process;

- (b) grants for the design, engineering, and construction of the required Quiet Zone safety measures; and

- (c) Oregon Department of Justice legal assistance to resolve unnecessary barriers imposed by railroad companies: extra-regulatory contracts, surprise costs, and superfluous process requirements.

Please contact [pfargo@emoregon.org](mailto:pfargo@emoregon.org) and [bconroy@emoregon.org](mailto:bconroy@emoregon.org) to schedule a meeting regarding the Quiet Zone need. Solving this problem at the State level has the potential to transform the lives of hundreds of thousands of Oregonians.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 2025, and thank you for your good work to move us all forward.

Very respectfully,

Peter Fargo  
Baker City  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon