

June 14, 2025

Topic - HB 2025 Testimony

Chairs Rep. McLain, Senator Gorsek, Vice-Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony and for the dedicated work you have collectively put forth on this bill. Your efforts are sincerely appreciated. I am submitting this written testimony to supplement the oral comments I entered into the record at the 6/12/2025 hearing on HB 2025.

I am mostly supportive of HB 2025 but have concerns about Section 50 related to the Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV).

Oregon operates more than 400 airports, primarily to serve the less than one-quarter of one percent of the population certified to pilot an aircraft in this state - 96 are public use and 360 are private. A number of these airports receive millions of dollars every year from the FAA and the State of Oregon. Over the past 20 years, Connect Oregon (CO) has awarded close to \$150 million to airports across the state.

Most Oregon airports fail to generate revenue thus are chronically dependent on federal and state money. I urge Oregon lawmakers to require applicants seeking Connect Oregon and ODAV funding to move towards a self-sustaining model for both operational and capital costs.

The suggestions offered below present ways ODAV and the general aviation community can and should assume full financial responsibility for their aviation activities. By shifting the costs to those who use these airports, Connect Oregon funds currently subsidizing the aviation sector can be redirected towards public transit, rail, safe routes to schools, rural transportation upgrades, walking and bicycle paths as well as other crucial programs.

- Establish landing fees for all aircraft including those weighing less than 10,000 lbs. This fee should apply to private and recreational flights as well as training operations including touch-and-gos.
- ORS 836.105 addresses airport licensing and annual renewal fees. Using the Hillsboro Airport (HIO) as an example, HIO is the largest general aviation airport in Oregon, but pays only \$75 per year to renew its license. Smaller GA airports pay even less. By substantially raising these fees, the onus for covering these costs can and should be passed onto the users of these airports instead of residents, many of whom do not have the financial wherewithal or interest in flying in and out of GA airports. For additional information on ORS 836.105 licensing fees see https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_836.105.
- ORS 837.045 lists aircraft registration requirements. The current annual cost to register a single-engine fixed wing aircraft or a helicopter in Oregon is \$65. Owners of motor vehicles pay more to register their cars. Earlier this year, my husband and I paid \$221.00 in registration renewal costs for our 2017 Corolla - \$196 went to the Department of Motor Vehicles and \$25 to the Department of Environmental Quality. Our renewal is required every two years, so this comes to just over \$110 per year. Shockingly, our fees exceed the \$65 annual cost of registering piston engine helicopters and single engine aircraft in Oregon. A twin-engine aircraft that delivers twice the noise and pollution as a single engine, pays only \$150 each year. These are the types of aircraft frequently used by the student pilots who relentlessly circle homes, schools, neighborhoods, prime farmland and waterways while spewing noise, lead, and other toxins, often at low altitudes. For additional information on ORS 837.045 aircraft registration fee requirements see https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_837.045.

- Require owners of GA aircraft to pay a luxury tax. The State of Washington recently passed legislation of this nature as part of a larger transportation package included in SB 5801 (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billssummary/?BillNumber=5801&Year=2025>).

NEW SECTION. Sec. 208. (1)(a) In addition to taxes required under chapters 82.08, 82.12, and 82.48 RCW, there is levied and collected from every person in this state a tax for the privilege of using within this state as a consumer any noncommercial aircraft if the value of the aircraft exceeds \$500,000.

(b) The tax is levied and must be collected in an amount equal to the value of the aircraft that exceeds \$500,000, multiplied by 10 percent.

(2) The tax imposed in this section does not apply if the sale to, or the use by, the present user or his or her bailor or donor has already been subjected to the tax under section 207 of this act and the tax has been paid by the present user or by his or her bailor or donor.

(3) The tax imposed in this section does not apply in respect to the use by a nonresident of Washington of a noncommercial aircraft, which is registered or licensed under the laws of the state of his or her residence.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "value" means the fair market value of the noncommercial aircraft. In the case of a leased noncommercial aircraft in which the consumer is required to make periodic lease payments, "value" of the aircraft means the fair market value of the aircraft at the inception of the lease.

- Section 1 of HB 2025 requires ODOT to engage in annual and biennial audits. To insure greater accountability and transparency about how limited transportation resources are being spent in Oregon, I urge you to place these same requirements on ODAV.
- The members of the ODAV board are primarily aviation expansion advocates who tend to promote the interests of airport owners and pilots while minimizing and disregarding the negative effects of aviation activities on impacted residents. As such there is an inherent bias in their decision making process. Consequently, they do not represent the broader interests of the community. In May of 2024 the Colorado General Assembly took steps to address a similar situation with the passage of HB 24-1235. The bill added two new members to the Colorado Aeronautical Board to represent the concern of residents of communities impacted by aviation. In addition it required the Aeronautics Division, "to work with the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment to evaluate, educate, and provide technical assistance to airports regarding adverse impacts of aircraft noise and leaded aviation fuel." I urge you to pass legislation of a similar nature in Oregon especially in light of the highly polluting, disruptive and controversial nature of aircraft activity. For information on Colorado's HB 24-1235 see <https://www.cohousedems.com/news/signed!-legislation-to-reduce-lead-and-noise-pollution,-protect-colorado's-air>
- Section 50 of HB 2025 speaks to the requirements of airports submitting proposals for Connect Oregon grants. In the interest of transparency and accountability, I urge lawmakers to require ODOT to post all Connect Oregon proposals submitted by applicants on a publicly accessible website. In addition, I urge the legislature to require each proposal to provide detail about potential jobs created as a result of the funding to include the exact nature of the job, will it be permanent or temporary, how much will it pay, will it be part-time or full-time, will it be benefited, will it go to people living in the local community or students recruited from overseas such as those interested in accruing hours towards commercial pilot certification? In addition, grant proposals should include the cost of noise, global warming and environmental pollutants generated by these airports on both a per project and cumulative basis over the history of the airport. I also ask that each applicant be required to list all other grants already received in previous Connect Oregon, ODAV and federal funding cycles.

OPPOSE HB 2153

A hearing held in March of this year by the Joint Transportation Committee on HB 2153 proposed doubling the tax on turbo and jet fuel - an increase that will likely be passed on to commercial airline passengers whose ticket fees already subsidize a substantial portion of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The vast majority of commercial airline passengers are not GA airport users. HB 2153 is yet another blatant attempt by ODAV and the aviation sector to force the public to subsidize airports on behalf of a wealthy few. I urge you to oppose this bill.

Concluding Remarks

If, as an individual, I decide to invest in a fancy new car, it is my responsibility to provide a garage and other infrastructure to accommodate this purchase. There is no state fund that contributes to the cost of building a garage big enough to store my new car. Nor do I have the right to lay claim to a neighbor's property by arguing that I now require a longer driveway to accommodate my new purchase.

Yet Oregon's current transportation policies make special allowances for wealthy and ultra-wealthy Oregonians and out of state businesses who have the financial wherewithal to own private jets and aircraft. Indeed, the legislature requires the public to subsidize hangars, which are essentially oversized garages, on behalf of this privileged few. This entitled minority also aggressively claims the right to seize neighboring properties by arguing that they need longer runways and other amenities for their highly polluting and self aggrandizing aircraft.

Oregon legislators are doing a grave disservice to their constituents by continuing to lavish scarce transportation dollars on the wealthiest members of the community (those who can afford to own their own airports, private jets and recreational aircraft) by shortchanging residents who rely on public transit and other far less polluting transportation options. Many people who testified before the Joint Committee on Transportation this legislative session can't even afford to own a car, or else choose not to because of serious concerns about the impact on the environment. A number of disabled people also commented on the challenges they encounter in accessing adequate public transit.

I urge you to address the glaring disparities outlined in this testimony by shifting exorbitant aviation funding to other critical transportation projects.

Respectfully,

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