

Joint Committee on Transportation Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 2025, the transportation package currently under consideration in the Oregon Legislature. This bill presents a facade of addressing the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) financial issues while, in reality, it exacerbates the existing problems. The promise of over \$5 billion in mega-projects is not supported by adequate funding, which raises serious concerns about accountability and fiscal responsibility.

HB 2025 allocates a mere \$1.75 to \$1.95 billion for five listed projects that collectively require approximately \$3.5 billion or more. This significant shortfall indicates a lack of transparency and foresight in budgeting. Moreover, the bill fails to account for predictable cost overruns on crucial projects, such as the Interstate Bridge Replacement, which is projected to escalate to \$9 billion, and the Hood River Bridge, with an increased cost of \$1.1 billion.

The absence of funding for these major projects not only undermines the credibility of ODOT but also leaves taxpayers vulnerable to future financial burdens. It is troubling that ODOT has a history of underestimating project costs and over-relying on optimistic revenue projections, which has led to management failures contributing to the agency's current financial predicament.

The critical question remains whether the funds allocated in HB 2025 are sufficient to cover the financial obligations created by these projects. Given the projected costs, it is evident that the annual allocation of \$125 million, when bonded, is insufficient, as it supports only half of the unfunded costs. This indicates a reckless approach to fiscal policy that could lead to future

demands for additional funding from the General Fund, ultimately detracting from essential services such as education and healthcare.

Furthermore, the bill's vague financial assumptions and lack of detailed cost analysis reflect a troubling disregard for accountability. The legislative authors appear unaware of the revenue they claim to raise, which raises significant concerns about the legitimacy of this proposal.

Additionally, I am expressing my unequivocal opposition to the proposed bill that seeks to increase various taxes and fees related to transportation. The financial burden this bill places on taxpayers is both excessive and unjustifiable.

The cumulative effect of these proposed tax increases will be detrimental to the financial well-being of countless residents in our state. It is essential to recognize that many families are already grappling with rising costs of living, and imposing these additional financial burdens is unwarranted.

Please reconsider the implications of this legislation and take a stand against the financial strain it would impose on taxpayers. We must prioritize the fiscal health of our citizens over increased revenue through such measures.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I hope to see action taken to protect taxpayers from these unjust increases.

**Sincerely,
Eric Vermillion,
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