

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Stites and I am a Portland resident, an environmental advocate, and someone who relies heavily on various forms of transit, including public and active transit. I am here today to urge you all to move HB 2025 forward. While there are many shortcomings that stemmy our ability to comply with our state's ambitious climate, public health, and equity goals, compromise is a reflection of the legislative and democratic process, and quite frankly, at this point, we need some semblance of informed legislation to keep our roads safe for all users. This requires multiple elements, but namely, it includes keeping roads safe and drivable while discouraging modes of transit that make our air unsafe to breathe, all while simultaneously supporting efforts that ensure safe, reliable, and accessible opportunities for active and public transit.

Moreover, these efforts must be creative to ensure that Oregonians are not disproportionately impacted by flat, across-the-board sales taxes, which tend to prejudice low-income, rural, and BIPOC folks. With that in mind, next time around, I urge this committee to reconsider taxes on new cars that allow for a certain degree of proportionality to what someone can afford. Similarly, this state desperately needs to put more clean cars, and specifically, clean trucks on the road.

This will have palpable environmental quality and public health benefits, but will also help to level and offset the impacts that intensive economic activity imparts on our communities and our infrastructure.

And more broadly, I'd like to re-emphasize the need to prioritize safety-focused transit that makes walking, riding, rolling, and utilizing other public transit offerings an accessible and empowering option. A year and change ago, I was unfortunately hit by an uninsured driver and left without a car for months. As frustrating as that situation was, it pushed me to utilize the public transit and pedestrian resources that have always been available to me, but I never utilized to the maximum extent. And shame on me. But I realized that once I figured the system out, it is so much easier than being in a car, paying for parking, sitting in traffic, etc. and I know that I'm doing a small part to keep the air cleaner and the streets safer for myself and for my neighbors. There are so many Oregonians like me who are similarly situated, and now we have the opportunity to facilitate another generation of multi-modal transit users. And, more importantly, I'd be remised if I did not acknowledge that we have an obligation to create safe, reliable and accessible opportunities for all Oregonians who do not necessarily choose what kind of transit they participate in for whatever reason. But take it from me, if you build it, they will come and now is the time to take a multi-faceted approach to funding programs like great streets and safe routes to school, which make our communities safer.

That being said, I urge you to move HB 2025 forward, and perhaps circle back in the future years, so that our streets can be safer for all and we can continue to move forward.

Thank you for your time,

Mary Stites
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