



American Planning Association
Oregon Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

February 9, 2026

To: Senate Committee on Transportation

Re: **SB 1542 and SB 1543**

Position: **Support**

Dear Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Weber and members of the committee:

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on **SB 1542 and SB 1543**.

OAPA is a nonprofit professional membership organization of over 800 planners and those who work with planning in formulating and implementing development and conservation policies at the state and local level. OAPA works to create sustainable and vibrant Oregon communities through professional development, advocacy for sound planning, providing resources to meet the challenges of growth and change, and embracing and promoting diversity, inclusion and equity.

SB 1542 directs the Oregon Transportation Commission to create a 10-year capital investment plan that must include a scoring methodology to score and rank projects before they are added to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, adds criteria the commission must consider before adding a project, requires the Department of Transportation to produce a condition report on the highways, and specifies additional information the commission must include on its website.

SB 1543 changes the Oregon Transportation Commission and directs the commission to adopt a policy on handling debt for road projects. The Act says that the Department of Transportation may still request that bonds be issued, but first it must notify the Oregon Transportation Commission and have the request reviewed. The Act modifies the membership of the Oregon Transportation Commission and directs the commission to develop a debt financing management policy for all debt financing issued to fund highway projects. It provides that before the Department of Transportation may request

the State Treasurer to issue bonds, the department must first submit the proposed request to the Oregon Transportation Commission for review. The Act declares an emergency and takes effect upon passage.

Together, SB 1542 and SB 1543 create a coordinated framework that aligns transportation investment decisions with **safety, equity, climate, accessibility, transparency, and long-term fiscal responsibility**.

The Human and Economic Toll of Inaction

Traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Oregon are a growing concern. In 2024, **58 people were killed** in traffic crashes in Portland, representing a **22% increase** from the previous year. Statewide, traffic-related crashes cost Oregon **\$16.3 billion in economic and quality-of-life costs** in 2023

<https://tripnet.org/reports/addressing-americas-traffic-safety-crisis-oregon-news-release-07-02-2024/>

Oregon's Traffic Safety Action Plan (TSAP) indicates that fatalities and serious injuries have been steadily rising, with fatalities up 33% and serious injuries up 82% compared to pre-2020 averages. Pedestrian fatalities have more than doubled since 2009, with pedestrian deaths rising from an average of 47 per year to 97 per year from 2019 to 2023. (Source:Oregon Transportation Safety Action Plan Update, link: https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Safety/Documents/Transportation_Safety_Action_Plan_Crash_Trend_Analysis.pdf)

These statistics underscore the need for **data-driven investment** in transportation infrastructure that prioritizes **safety, equity, and sustainability**. These numbers represent **real people, families disrupted, and communities** that are suffering. SB 1542 is a critical step toward reducing these numbers by creating a more **data-driven and transparent process** that prioritizes **safety and equity** in Oregon's transportation investments.

Current funding streams for ODOT and local jurisdictions are insufficient for maintaining and operating existing facilities and for implementing the safety improvements needed to reduce injuries and fatalities. Funding for operations and maintenance (O&M) and safety must be adequately addressed before expenditures on large expansion projects are made. Safe and equitable transportation systems are essential for supporting healthy, affordable, and thriving Oregon communities.

Prioritizing Safety, Equity and Accessibility

OAPA focuses on safety for all users, being mindful of vulnerable road users while also addressing vehicle-related air pollution, public health concerns, and the need to connect communities safely and efficiently to promote active transportation. This will decrease vehicle miles, which in turn will reduce air pollution and promote increased public health and well-being.

OAPA supports funding and projects that prioritize safety, accessibility, community health, equitable mobility, clean air, climate mitigation and sustainable and resilient communities. Funding must prioritize projects that offer protections, such as safer road design and reduced traffic, for the most vulnerable road users, aiming for zero fatalities or injuries.

Embracing the ability to modify weights for each region should also account for regional variation to ensure rural communities are justly served. It is important that benefits include underserved communities, including many rural areas.

SB 1542 establishes a 10-year capital investment plan and includes a scoring methodology for transportation projects to prioritize safety and preservation. The bill requires that safety and preservation receive the highest scoring weights—a core provision that aligns with OAPA's priority to prioritize safety for all users, particularly vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists. Additionally, SB 1542 emphasizes community-led engagement, ensuring that the voices of underserved populations are actively included in decision-making.

SB 1543 reinforces these goals by ensuring inclusive and representative decision-making at the Oregon Transportation Commission. By including regional representation and a member who primarily uses transit, walking, or biking, the Commission will better reflect the needs of non-drivers, rural communities, and vulnerable road users, strengthening equity and accessibility outcomes statewide. OAPA also promotes transparent, accountable, and equitable decision-making and implementation.

Fix-It-First and Resilient Infrastructure

SB 1542's requirement for a **condition report** on Oregon's highways supports **OAPA's "fix-it-first" approach**, which prioritizes repairing and maintaining existing infrastructure over expanding capacity.

Efficient and equitable resource allocation is critical, and the cost burden should be shared equitably, ensuring local governments have the necessary support.

This is aligned with the bill's "fix-it-first" guardrail. The debt guardrails protect maintenance and safety funding from being crowded out. "The scoring methodology for the STIP must prioritize preservation and safety, particularly when pavement or bridge conditions are below the state of good repair targets." ([SB 1542 – 2026 Regular Session, page 4](#))

This provision ensures that **safety and preservation** take precedence, creating a **resilient** and **sustainable** transportation system.

SB 1543 further supports a fix-it-first, fiscally responsible approach by requiring the development of a transportation debt management policy and oversight of bonding decisions, ensuring that limited resources are not diverted from maintenance and safety projects to unsustainable debt service obligations.

Public Transit, Multimodal Access and EV Infrastructure

OAPA supports legislation that increases access to innovative, clean, multimodal transportation options for every community and context, including but not limited to bicycling, walking, rideshare, park-and-ride, and public transportation.

While SB 1542 represents a strong step toward improving governance and transparency, it does not directly address the substantial funding increases necessary for public transportation and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. OAPA supports legislation that increases funding to expand an accessible, reliable, and affordable public transportation system, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, to provide affordable, reliable, and sustainable travel options across the state.

These infrastructure investments are critical to ensuring **Oregon's transportation network** remains **equitable** and **sustainable** and that we meet the **climate crisis** head-on. More work will still be needed in future sessions to provide for these investments.

Integrating Transportation, Housing, and Land-Use Planning

SB 1542 addresses important transportation needs but does not fully integrate **transportation, housing, and land-use planning** to create **compact, mixed-use neighborhoods** that reduce emissions and **traffic congestion**. OAPA supports legislation to integrate transportation, housing, and land-use planning initiatives that reduce emissions by providing compact, mixed-use neighborhoods supported by accessible walking, rolling, and transit options."

This integration will create equitable access to affordable housing and transportation, benefiting all Oregonians, particularly in underserved areas. We urge additional efforts in the next session to strengthen these connections.

Sustainable Revenue Strategy

OAPA supports an equitable mix of revenue increases necessary to fund both road maintenance and new projects. OAPA prioritizes legislation that advances a sustainable revenue strategy to ensure that Oregon's transportation system is adequately funded and advances a sustainable revenue strategy that right-sizes existing revenue streams and creates diverse future revenue streams aligned with Oregon's climate, housing, equity, and transportation goals.

While SB 1542 sets a foundation for transparent, **data-driven decision-making**, it is essential to explore additional **sustainable funding** mechanisms. Sustainable revenue sources, such as mileage-based user fees and congestion pricing, should be explored to help meet Oregon's transportation, housing, climate, and equity goals.

SB 1543 contributes directly to long-term fiscal sustainability by establishing clear guardrails around debt and requiring transparent oversight of borrowing decisions, helping ensure that current spending does not compromise future transportation funding needs.

While this bill helps set the stage for better decision-making, we recognize that further work will still be needed in the next session.

Conclusion: Act Now for a Safer, More Equitable Future

Safe and equitable transportation systems are the backbone of healthy, thriving Oregon communities. **Oregon cannot afford to delay**. Every day that passes without a **strategic, transparent, and equity-centered investment framework** means continued loss of life, poorer air quality, and missed opportunities for **healthier, connected communities**.

SB 1542 is a necessary step in creating a **data-driven, equitable, and resilient** transportation system, but further investments are needed to address **public transit** and **EV infrastructure**.

SB 1543 ensures that this system is governed transparently, inclusively, and responsibly so that public dollars are protected, and decision-making reflects the needs of all Oregonians.

For these reasons, OAPA respectfully urges a YES vote on SB 1542 and SB 1543.

OAPA urges the Committee to pass SB 1542 and SB 1543 swiftly. We look forward to collaborating with the legislature to ensure that **Oregon's transportation system is safe, equitable, and sustainable** for all residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tabitha Boschetti".

Tabitha Boschetti
Chair, Legislative and Policy Affairs Committee
Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association
www.oregonapa.org