

Chair McLain, Vice-Chairs Boshart Davis and Gamba, Members of the
House Committee on Transportation
February 11, 2026

Neutral on HB 4085

Self-driving single occupant vehicles rolling on Oregon's **costly, impermeable, inflexible** pavement need more complex regulation than current statute provides. But this **should not** be our primary focus.

What should our focus be?

Oregon has had safe "self-driving" cars for more than a century. Today these self-driving cars are **safer**,¹ more **economical** in moderately and heavily traveled corridors, and are **friendlier to the environment**² than their rubber-tired cousins. They allow **Freedom of Mobility** for *all people*, including those who cannot drive, and access for people requiring mobility devices, e.g., wheelchairs.

These self-driving cars roll on **flanged, steel wheels, guided by steel rails**. They do not have rubber tires that poison our water table, fish and people.³ They are **FLEXIBLE** in terms of **CAPACITY**, providing **greater throughput** at **higher speeds** without over-consuming space needed for productive human activity/economy.⁴ They are **FLEXIBLE** in terms of adverse weather conditions. They are more **RESILIENT** following seismic events and other geological disruptions.

On many corridors rail transport is more economical to build, maintain and operate. Rail conserves energy, materials, land, time and lives. **Modern, developed nations** depend on rail transport. In the first half of the twentieth century, America did too. *Has the US population shrunk so much that we can no longer justify the investment? Or has political manipulation distorted transportation economics?*

ODOT's Mission Statement: "We provide a safe and reliable **multimodal** transportation system that connects people and helps Oregon's communities and economy thrive."

That should be our focus!

NOTE: *The first electric (battery-powered) self-driving car in Oregon, using flanged steel wheels on steel rails, was built and operated by the **private sector**, in a **rural area** – without subsidy, economic or regulatory manipulation – because it was cost-effective to do so.⁵*

We need both road and rail, but we need to utilize each mode for the purposes for which each mode is best suited to provide.

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¹ <https://www.onerail.org/rail-among-safest-modes-transportation/>

² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15568318.2024.2411588>

³ Washington State University study on Toxic Tiers, <https://extension.wsu.edu/water/article/toxicities/>

⁴ [https://eng.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Industrial_and_Systems_Engineering/The_Art_of_Insight_in_Science_and_Engineering_\(Mahajan\)/01%3A_Part_I-_Organizing_Complexity/01%3A_Divide_and_Conquer/1.02%3A_Rails_vs_Roads](https://eng.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Industrial_and_Systems_Engineering/The_Art_of_Insight_in_Science_and_Engineering_(Mahajan)/01%3A_Part_I-_Organizing_Complexity/01%3A_Divide_and_Conquer/1.02%3A_Rails_vs_Roads)

⁵ <https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/cherry-grove/>