

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/toxictires/>

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/>