

Submitter: Mark Sterner
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1599

While I strongly support voter participation and transparent decision-making, I have concerns about the election timing changes proposed in this bill.

SB 1599 moves the public vote on a major transportation funding measure to the May 2026 primary election. I believe placing a measure of this scale on a primary ballot risks reduced voter turnout and limits full public participation. Primary elections historically draw fewer voters than general elections, meaning decisions with significant statewide financial and policy impacts could be decided by a smaller portion of the electorate.

Additionally, I am concerned that accelerating the election timeline may not allow sufficient time for voters to fully understand the financial implications, project scope, and long-term obligations tied to the transportation measure. Oregonians deserve ample time, clear information, and robust public discussion before voting on measures that may affect taxes, infrastructure funding, or cost of living.

I also have concerns about the emergency clause attached to this legislation. Declaring an emergency on election-scheduling policy reduces the opportunity for public input and legislative scrutiny, which may undermine public trust in the process.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose SB 1599 or to consider alternative timelines that maximize voter participation, transparency, and informed decision-making.