

Testimony for RUC HB 4126

We need a rational method for determining the Road User Charge. I support HB 4126 as the next step to that goal.

As revenue from the gas tax is steadily less able to fill our needs for maintenance and preservation of our roads and bridges, we need a sustainable mechanism to fill that need. The Road User Charge will do that. If set appropriately, the RUC should go a long way to meeting that goal.

This bill directs ODOT to choose target standards for our road system, which could include such parameters as condition of the road surface, integrity and seismic resilience of bridges, safety statistics, emissions, and congestion. ODOT will then determine the overall biennial cost of meeting those standards and the mileage driven. Using that data, ODOT will then recommend to the Legislature what RUC will meet those standards and the Legislature will set the rate.

Set standards, figure out the cost to get there and the miles we drive, and set a rate to meet that need.

Since electric vehicle drivers are not paying the gas tax to support maintenance of our roads, it is fitting that they should lead the way with the requirement to participate in the RUC. As the gas tax continues to dwindle as a reliable revenue source, other drivers should be brought into the RUC. However, this aspect of the plan is not included in the current bill.

Some caveats to eventual full implementation of the RUC:

1. Corporations who deliver to homes and businesses using EVs should be included.
2. Rural residents who have limited alternate modes of travel available to them (such as transit or safe roads for cycling) should be provided with an offset.
3. Other projects, such as widening roadways, should be paid for in a separate budget and a different funding source. How much will be expended on such projects will determine how much that funding source needs to raise.

I strongly urge your vote for HB 4126 to develop a rational basis for a major funding source for our roadways.

My name is Joseph Stenger MD, Co-Chair of the Transportation Team for MCAT, Mobilizing Climate Action Together, a group of experienced volunteers who help steward significant greenhouse gas reduction policy into state law and advocate for an expanding green economy in Oregon.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians!