

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Transportation
re: SB 1542, SB 1543
February 11, 2026

Kristopher Fortin Grijalva, Transportation Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative, and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council support for SB 1542, SB 1543

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

Oregonians need a transportation system that maximizes its investments in safety, road and bridge maintenance, and climate impacts, and does not put Oregon's future at risk by taking on unnecessary debt. That is why, on behalf of our thousands of members statewide, I am asking you to pass both Guardrails for Good Governance (SB 1542) and Measure What We Drive (SB 1543).

Oregon Environmental Council has consistently been a committed transportation stakeholder for decades, willing to collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders on equitable and innovative solutions. Guardrails for Good Governance and Measure What We Drive represent some of the best ideas and practices for accountability and transparency for Departments of Transportation from around the country. States like Washington, Virginia and Colorado have adopted similar programs, which have led to greater transparency, responsible spending and rebuilt trust with the public. Setting up our own Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon Transportation Commission with these tools would be setting up our state for success as the search for solutions to our transportation challenges and deficits continues in the coming years.

Guardrails for Good Governance is important because ODOT's loans have increased by 400% since 2007 and are outpacing the money coming in, leaving less for bridge and road maintenance, seismic retrofits, and safety investments. Current policies incentivize ODOT to take on more debt without a completed project plan that includes a full analysis of costs, trade-offs, and debt implications. SB 1543 provides the public with advance notice of upcoming meeting agendas, ensuring they have the information and the opportunity to engage in transportation decisions relevant to them.

Measure What We Drive is important because ODOT is prioritizing new projects without a clear way to pay for them, without accountability or legislative oversight, and over current roads and bridges that are in disrepair. Measure What We Drive requires ODOT to provide an assessment on how new projects align with transportation goals, a public accountability dashboard showing how the agency is doing in meeting transportation goals, and mandates investment in existing roads and bridges when they are not meeting maintenance standards.

With limited transportation dollars, we need to make every investment count without leveraging our future. Oregonians desperately need projects to prioritize maintaining current roads and bridges, investing in safety, and advancing a climate-forward transportation sector.

In addition, these policies are based on proven policies from other states and are budget-neutral. These bills will improve alignment and accountability in meeting ODOT's transportation goals. As we consider a future transportation package in the coming year that will most likely ask the public for more of their tax dollars, this is the perfect time to reassess our status quo and learn from our peers in other states by taking the best ideas that they have to offer. Oregonians need Guardrails for Good Governance and Measure What We Drive to pass.

Sincerely,

Kristopher Fortin Grijalva
Transportation Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council
kristopherf@oeconline.org