

Submitter: Douglas Allen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Capital Construction

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1601

I strongly object to the cuts in rail funding in the -3 amendment to SB 1601. This money does not come from motorists, and should not be spent on highways. This bill shows that all the talk about the "promises of HB 2017" are purely show, because this funding was an important part of the compromises that went into crafting the bi-partisan HB 2017 package.

Rep. Peter DeFazio told the Joint Committee on Transportation, prior to the 2025 session, that Oregon had a sad history of leaving a lot of federal money on the table because we never were ready with the local match for big Federal Railroad Administration grants. SB 1601-3 will take us out of the running for grants that would allow capacity improvement on the Amtrak Cascades route between Portland and Eugene. This is tragic because the current Federal administration is still being generous with the FRA grants funded by the Biden-era infrastructure bills. Oregon now has plans in place, with NEPA approval, for expanding rail between Portland and Eugene, but we need those federal grants.

Ridership on the Amtrak Cascades is at record levels; we are getting new modern equipment shortly; and Connect Oregon grants help not only rail freight, the most climate-friendly way to move freight, but passenger rail as well, providing high-class alternatives to single-occupancy auto travel. Please don't derail Oregon's plans for improved passenger and freight rail service.