

Submitter: Twyla Bofto

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1601

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to the -3 amendment to SB 1601, which would strip \$62 million in dedicated rail funding and redirect it to the highway fund.

This proposal would significantly harm Oregon's long-term transportation future.

The funding at issue is not discretionary fluff. It is the critical state match required to unlock substantial federal investment for passenger rail improvements along the Willamette Valley corridor, including service improvements to Amtrak Cascades. For every \$20 Oregon invests, we stand to receive up to \$80 in federal funds. Eliminating this match does not "save" money — it sends Oregon's share to other states that are actively competing for and securing rail investment.

That is not fiscal responsibility. That is forfeiting opportunity.

Currently, there are only two round trips per day between Portland and Eugene. These trains are frequently sold out. Demand already exceeds supply. Cutting this funding guarantees stagnation — locking Oregon into limited service for years to come despite steady population growth in the Willamette Valley.

The Portland–Salem–Albany–Eugene corridor is one of the fastest-growing regions in the state. If we fail to invest in multimodal transportation now, we will pay far more later in congestion, road expansion costs, environmental mitigation, and lost economic opportunity.

This amendment also disproportionately harms:

Commuters who rely on rail for reliable intercity travel

Small businesses and tourism economies in corridor communities

Students traveling between university cities

Seniors and Oregonians with disabilities

The one in three Oregonians who do not drive

Passenger rail is not a luxury. It is essential infrastructure.

Highways already have multiple funding streams. Rail does not. Diverting these funds undermines years of planning, environmental review, and coordination with federal partners. It signals to Washington, D.C. that Oregon is not serious about transportation modernization — at a time when federal rail dollars are historically available.

Moreover, rail investment is not anti-highway. It relieves highway congestion. Every full train represents hundreds of vehicles not competing for space on I-5. Expanding Cascades service strengthens freight movement as well, improving shared corridor reliability for both people and goods.

If Oregon truly wants to prepare for future population growth, economic resilience, and climate realities, we must invest in balanced transportation options — not retreat from them.

Defunding these projects now will:

Delay service expansion for years

Forfeit federal matching funds

Undermine economic competitiveness

Increase long-term infrastructure costs

Limit mobility options for growing communities

I respectfully urge you to reject the -3 amendment to SB 1601 and preserve rail funding. Oregon's transportation future depends on forward-thinking investments, not short-term reallocation.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.