



Co-Chairs Girod and Nosse, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction:

On behalf of Oregon's K-12 education community, including school districts, education service districts, administrators, and school board members across the state, we write to express our strong opposition to the provision that redirects \$17 Million in Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding to backfill the Oregon Department of Transportation State Highway Fund in SB 1601 -3.

Safe Routes to School is not a peripheral program. It is a core safety investment that directly impacts students' ability to get to and from school safely each day. For thousands of Oregon families, particularly in rural areas and communities with limited infrastructure, Safe Routes to School funding provides the sidewalks, crossings, lighting, traffic calming, and pathway improvements that make walking and rolling to school safe and possible.

In parts of the state, many neighborhoods lack continuous sidewalks, marked crossings, and safe pedestrian infrastructure. Students are often required to navigate busy roadways, incomplete pathways, or unsafe intersections. For these communities, SRTS dollars are not enhancements; they are essential safety interventions.

Redirecting SRTS funds would stall or cancel projects that communities have spent years planning. It would delay improvements already promised to families. And it would disproportionately impact students in areas with the greatest infrastructure gaps, often lower-income communities and communities outside major urban cores.

We recognize the seriousness of ODOT's fiscal challenges and appreciate the complexity of the choices before you. However, the safety of our children must remain a core priority. Oregon has made incremental but meaningful gains in safely moving children and families to and from school. Safe Routes to School has:

- Improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure near schools
- Increased safety education for students and families
- Reduced traffic congestion around school campuses
- Supported healthier, more active students
- Strengthened partnerships between schools, cities, and transportation agencies

These gains are fragile. Diverting funds now would undermine years of collaborative work and erode trust with communities that were promised safer routes for their children.

We also have some school districts including Beaverton School District, Bend-LaPine School District, Centennial School District, Hood River Council School District, North Wasco County School District, and Portland Public Schools who have dedicated Safe Routes to Schools Coordinators through SRTS education grants. These roles are critical to coordinating with transportation agencies, and connecting with youth, families, and community partners to strengthen and implement safe routes to school plans.

We urge you to prioritize and protect Safe Routes to School funding. Ensuring that students can safely access their education is foundational to Oregon's commitment to opportunity, equity, and student well-being. Safe Routes to School is a critical part of that progress and should remain a protected investment.

Thank you for your leadership and for keeping student safety at the center of Oregon's transportation and budget decisions.