

Written Testimony on SB 1601 and the -3 Amendment

Position: Oppose

Dear Chair Girod, Chair Nosse, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to oppose the cuts to Safe Routes to School and Oregon Community Paths proposed in the -3 amendment to SB 1601.

Oregon should not balance its transportation budget at the expense of schoolchildren, disabled Oregonians, and communities already facing rising costs, economic instability, and climate impacts.

I support maintaining our transportation system. But we should not do so by cutting the very programs that protect our most vulnerable residents. If funds must be redirected, major highway projects should be prioritized before eliminating child safety and community mobility investments.

Safe Routes to School is not a luxury, it is essential infrastructure.

Across Oregon, Bike Buses and walk-and-roll programs are growing. These efforts reduce emissions, lower household costs, improve student health, and build community connection. But they rely on safe crossings, sidewalks, traffic calming, and off-street paths. Without that infrastructure, families are forced back into cars, not by choice, but by necessity.

For the past four years, I have helped build a Bike Bus program at a Title 1 school in North Portland. This work would not have been possible without partnership from the Safe Routes to School program. **Cuts of \$17 million from Safe Routes to School and \$8 million from Oregon Community Paths, more than 60% of both budgets, will leave schools like ours behind.** Safety is not negotiable.

More than 80% of Oregonians use local trails. Off-street paths are the safest spaces for people of all ages and abilities to walk and bike. It is inequitable to shift costs onto the 30% of Oregonians who cannot or do not drive while cutting the limited funding that supports their mobility and safety.

These cuts are also barriers to employment. **You cannot find or keep a job if you cannot safely get there.** Reducing multimodal investments harms low-income workers, youth, elders, disabled residents, and rural communities at a time when **affordability matters** most.

Programs like Jump Start are successfully teaching students to ride safely and building long-term capacity within schools. Cutting infrastructure funding undermines these investments and contradicts the state's climate commitments under Executive Order 25-29.

This proposal is not a sustainable solution. **The short-term savings are small compared to the long-term costs in preventable injuries, healthcare, lost opportunity, and climate impacts.**

Please preserve:

- Safe Routes to School funding
- Multimodal Active Transportation Fund (including Oregon Community Paths)
- Transportation Operating Funds supporting rail, paths, and paratransit

Communities are stepping up. Schools are building momentum. We need more of these programs, not fewer.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,
Jessica Fletcher