

Testimony to the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction re: SB 1601

March 4, 2026

**Kristopher Fortin Grijalva, Senior Transportation, Thriving Communities 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 opposition to SB 1601

Dear Chair Girod, Chair Nosse, and members of the committee,

On behalf of our thousands of members statewide, OEC opposes SB 1601. Oregon should not balance its books at the expense of schoolchildren, disabled folks, or communities already facing rising costs, soaring unemployment, and climate impacts.

Why charge the 30% of Oregonians who cannot or will not drive with an expensive system they will never use? Oregon's massive, expensive road system created this budget crisis, yet the state is raiding from the tiny sliver of funding dedicated to things like child safety, trains, and community paths. We are forcing the 30% of Oregonians who do not or cannot drive to pay for road debt they didn't create.

These programs were built with broad support because they work. They reduce pollution, lower household costs, and keep rural communities connected to the rest of the state. Cutting programs that increase affordability for Oregonians struggling to make ends meet is not the answer.

This plan goes against Governor Kotek's climate orders. This budget ignores the Governor's recent Executive Order (25-29) which tells state agencies to speed up our transition to clean energy and reduce pollution. Yet this budget raids nearly \$50 million from safety, rail, transit, and EV charging, which will make it impossible for Oregon to meet its own pollution reduction goals.

Our coalition is done waiting. OEC, along with other partners in the Move Oregon Forward coalition, came to the table with no-cost and low-cost ideas based on successful models in other states, yet we face a complete lack of cooperation. Lawmakers have repeatedly promised to prioritize community needs. Yet, even with an alternative available that preserves both jobs and essential programs, they still choose these cuts. You cannot continue to siphon tax dollars from working Oregonians while cutting the very services those dollars are meant to fund. If these cuts move forward now, we expect our priorities to be first in line in the 2027 transportation package.

Sincerely,

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