



Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Nosse, and members of the committee—

Climate Solutions strongly opposes SB 1601 and the -3 amendment because of its dire negative impacts on a safer, multimodal, and cleaner transportation system. Climate Solutions is a member of Move Oregon Forward, a coalition of 50+ statewide groups focused on a fair, just, and accessible transportation system.

In short, Oregon should not patch a budget hole by cutting the programs that keep people safe and lower costs and pollution—especially for schoolkids, disabled Oregonians, and rural communities.

While these may feel like “easy target” cuts, small line items with big consequences. You save a little now, and you pay more later—in crashes, pollution, and higher household transportation costs. Programs like safe routes to school, rail, flexible transit funding, chargers, and so on all help reduce air pollution and wear and tear on our roads. As a reminder, 19 of 36 counties (which comprise a large chunk of OR’s population) have air toxics high enough to increase your lifetime risk of cancer, according to the 2019 EPA Air Toxics Assessment, mainly from dirty diesel. The only way to cut all cancer-causing pollution in transportation is to electrify vehicles with clean power made right here in Oregon.

Not only is electrification key for public health, but the 2025 Oregon Energy Strategy also clearly affirmed that electrification is a cornerstone of meeting our energy goals and doing so in the least costly way for consumers. I would be remiss not to mention that the only way I know of to insulate Oregonians from rising transportation costs in driving is to go electric, which can be anywhere from ¼ to ⅓ of the total operating costs of a gas car.

Zooming in on one particular cut within TOF, the -3 would move about \$8M away from ODOT’s Community Charging Rebates, where 70% of funds are reserved for rural and disadvantaged communities. In Round 1, ODOT awarded rebates for public Level 2 chargers in places like Baker County through Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative; Clatsop County at sites like Fort George Brewery and the Inn at Cannon Beach; Jefferson County with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; and Hood River County through Hood River Electric’s community locations.

This program fills critical gaps I have heard legislators raise before: For a renter in an apartment building without a garage, it can mean the difference between being able to consider an EV or not. For a rural community, it means reliable charging access, making long-distance travel possible. For local businesses, it brings new customers who stop to charge and shop. Research has also consistently highlighted that EVs will bolster grid reliability, which means these programs with a particular rural focus also increase resiliency.

The timing matters. This buildout is being driven by time-limited federal dollars—ODOT is now administering CERTA funds through this program, and Round 4 is already closing early due to high demand. Oregon has very limited state funding in many of its electrification programs, so when you stack this with the fact that Oregon will have expended virtually all its federal funding that bolstered light-duty cars, and provides almost all our funding for MHD incentives and charging. State dollars are supposed to be the runway after the federal launchpad. If you cut the runway now, you are effectively making that cliff steeper, the drop-off more severe, and goals harder to meet. We should not fall for the notion that we can cut now and make up for lost progress with some future and uncertain revenue tool. Progress matters most right now in climate action.

We need to see action. If these cuts **do** move forward this year, we must see working Oregonians and the transportation we need to be front and center in building a 2027 package that can deliver real revenue - no IOUs, no silver bullets that never materialize - and restore these programs on January 1st, 2028.

We remain ready to work alongside you towards that shared goal.

Sincerely,

Brett Morgan
Transportation Policy Director at Climate Solutions