

Submitter: Ginger Pan

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1601

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

I strongly oppose the drastic proposed cuts to Connect Oregon, Community Paths, the Transportation Operating Fund, passenger rail, Safe Routes to School and reserves for non-highway programs as set forth in SB 1601, amendment -3.

I first want to recognize the position that you and the state are in with regard to budget, and I certainly wish it was not the reality of the situation. However, cutting programs that give Oregonians like you, me, and other Oregonians feasible alternatives to driving when gas prices are rising is not the way to go.

I do not drive – I have thankfully been in a situation so far where personally driving is not necessary, with fairly usable transit service, above-average (for the US) bike infrastructure, and passenger rail to meet nearly all of my transportation needs, both at home in Washington County and at university in Eugene. I fear that this will no longer be the case with further cuts to vital programs and funds proposed in SB 1601-3.

While I do not drive by choice, there are countless others who cannot make this choice. This includes children, people with disabilities, older adults, and many other vulnerable people. Non-drivers, of course, still need to have their transportation needs met, through modes like biking, transit, walking, passenger rail, car/vanpool, and other transportation options that Oregon has done a stellar job of promoting in the past.

Amtrak Cascades is a service that links my family and my school for me and plenty of my fellow students. I can savor a very enjoyable and affordable train ride instead of spending it on a highway in traffic, often for longer than I would on the train. I can see this is a sentiment shared by many – every Amtrak Cascades train I have been on has been packed. Cutting Cascades funding and thus service means cutting vital connections – the exact opposite of what a state that supports families would do. A combination of strong state and federal support for passenger rail in the Pacific Northwest is what makes Amtrak Cascades unique in its popularity and success. Killing that success through this bill runs contrary to everything that Oregon stands for.

Traffic violence is a huge and growing problem nationally – Safe Routes to School

protects some of the most vulnerable users of the built environment – children. No one wants their child to be hurt while going to and from school. Strong state support for Safe Routes to School in the past is what grew Safe routes programs across our state to be nationally recognized for their excellence and impact. Drastically cutting funding to Safe Routes to School means that these programs will not have anywhere near the same impact they have now – funding infrastructure like marked crossings and bike lanes, educating students on how to safely get around, and promoting healthier and more green ways to move. Investing in Safe Routes is an investment in the next generation of Oregonians.

Oregon cannot claim to be a state that values families, transportation, or the climate while destroying the programs that make these goals possible. Transportation is vital for everyone – access to necessities like healthcare, food, school, work, and community. Cutting Connect Oregon, Community Paths, the Transportation Operating Fund, passenger rail, Safe Routes to School and reserves for non-highway programs is not simply removing bloat, it is a bludgeoning of the people that make the state great. I urge you to reject the cuts and not abandon me and the countless other Oregonians that rely on these programs to get us where we need to go.

Very respectfully,

Ginger Pan

Eugene and Portland

A non-driver, a person that rides bikes, trains, and transit, and a student