



PROTECTING YOUR
RIGHT TO ROAM

March 4th, 2026

RE: Cuts to Safe Routes to School Funding and other Safety and Accessibility Programs in SB 1601 -3

Dear Chair Girod, Chair Nosse, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction,

On behalf of Oregon Walks and the communities we serve, we write in strong opposition to the proposed cuts to Safe Routes to School, Community Paths, and other safety and accessibility programs that primarily serve youth, elders, people with disabilities, and get us closer to a non-car centric transportation system.

The transportation budget paints a bleak picture: rather than pause construction of large mega-projects, legislators have chosen to reduce funding for popular transportation programs—programs that people feel and experience every day around the state—that keep people safe and connected.

Safety is not negotiable. Safety is a priority. This is a message we've heard time and again from legislators, local leaders, and leaders at ODOT across the state. And yet, this proposal cuts \$17 million from Safe Routes to School and \$8 million from Oregon Community Paths. These funds build sidewalks, crossings, and multiuse paths that allow children to walk & roll to school without risking their lives. They create safe connections between neighborhoods, schools, transit stops, and local businesses. They create routes for our elders to use morning, afternoon, and evening, as they get out of the house for exercise and community.

The budget also reduces Transportation Operations Funds and Connect Oregon. These programs were created with broad bipartisan support because they work. These are longstanding investments in transit, rail, paratransit, rural mobility, and other non-highway projects that support people who cannot or do not drive and that move us closer to our stated safety and climate goals. They reduce pollution, lower household transportation costs, and keep rural and urban communities alike connected to opportunity.

While we recognize the difficult choices you face, Oregon should not balance its books on the backs of children, disabled Oregonians, and communities already facing rising costs, economic uncertainty, and climate impacts.



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When budgets get tight, smaller programs are often targeted because they appear to offer quick savings. But cutting these investments is like stepping over dollars to pick up dimes. The immediate savings are small, while the long-term costs—in traffic injuries, household transportation burdens, deferred maintenance, and lost economic opportunity—are far greater.

Oregon's transportation system should reflect our values: safety, fiscal responsibility, and equitable access for all. These cuts, while continuing to march forward spending billions on large mega-projects, do not match our stated goals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Dennis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Dennis
Executive Director
Oregon Walks