

March 5, 2026

Joint Subcommittee On Capital Construction
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR, 97301



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

On behalf of Neighbors for Clean Air, a statewide organization that has worked for more than 15 years to ensure that every Oregonian has clean and healthy air to breathe, I write to ***oppose the cuts to Safe Routes to Schools, Connect Oregon, Transportation Operating Fund programs and Oregon Community Paths.***

Oregon should not balance its books at the expense of children's safety, clean air, and the health of communities already burdened by pollution, rising costs, and climate impacts. These proposed cuts undermine public health and climate progress at the very moment we need to accelerate both.

Transportation is Oregon's largest source of climate pollution. Programs like Safe Routes to School, Oregon Community Paths, transit investments, rail, and EV infrastructure are not expendable programs, they are essential public health and safety tools. They reduce diesel pollution, improve air quality, and give families affordable ways to get around without relying solely on cars.

Cutting more than 60% of funding from Safe Routes to School and Oregon Community Paths directly harms children and families. These programs fund sidewalks, crossings, and protected paths that prevent injuries and reduce exposure to harmful vehicle exhaust. At NCA, we work with frontline communities who live near highways, freight corridors, and distribution centers. We know firsthand that children walking along busy roadways are exposed to elevated levels of particulate pollution linked to asthma, heart disease, and cancer. Taking away funding that makes walking and biking safer also increases exposure to toxic air pollution.

These cuts would also worsen inequities. Roughly 30% of Oregonians do not or cannot drive, including low-income families, seniors, youth, and people with disabilities. Yet this proposal forces them to shoulder the burden of a road system they may never fully use, while slashing the limited funding that supports alternatives. In a time of economic uncertainty, we should be expanding affordable mobility options, not shrinking them.

The proposed budget reductions are short-sighted. Raiding smaller programs may produce immediate savings, but it creates far greater long-term costs in public health, climate damage,

and household transportation expenses. Investments in transit, community paths, rail, and EV infrastructure reduce pollution and healthcare costs while keeping more money in Oregonians' pockets.

This plan also contradicts Governor Kotek's recent Executive Order 25-29, which directs agencies to accelerate the transition to clean energy and reduce climate pollution. Cutting nearly \$50 million from programs that directly reduce transportation emissions makes it significantly harder for Oregon to meet its climate and air quality commitments.

These programs were created with broad bipartisan support because they work. They lower costs, reduce pollution, improve safety, and keep communities connected. Eliminating or severely weakening them undermines years of progress.

Oregon should not balance its transportation budget by sacrificing safety, clean air, and climate progress. We urge you to reject SB 1601 and the -3 amendment and pursue solutions that protect both fiscal responsibility and community health.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Mackenzie Springer
Transportation Advocacy Manager
Neighbors for Clean Air