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Testimony to the House Committee on Education on House Bill 2693

March 22, 2017

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council sat on the student transportation work group convened by Rep. McKeown between the 2015 and 2017 legislative sessions, and we support House Bill 2693.

This bill addresses a very important need: better access to transit and other transportation options for Oregon's high school students. Through free or reduced-price transit passes and increased transit service on routes that serve youth, the state can achieve multiple positive outcomes, ranging from healthier kids and cleaner air, to increased school attendance and performance, to relief for families who have work schedules or financial situations that make it difficult for them to chauffeur their children to school or after-school activities.

From an environmental perspective, if fewer parents need to drive their kids to and from school and/or extracurricular activities, it will reduce idling around schools (which contributes to poor air quality) and will reduce the carbon pollution that contributes to climate change. Better youth access to transit will also reduce congestion; in fact, travel surveys indicate that 9-15% of U.S. peak-period vehicle travel is due to parents chauffeuring their kids.ⁱ In addition, when kids are exposed to public transit early in life, they are more likely to become life-long riders.

Youth access to transit also provides economic benefits. Oregon employees need a skilled work force: more transportation options increase school attendance, performance and graduation rates. In addition, when families spend less on chauffeuring kids, they have more money to spend on local goods and services. Recent research finds the cost to families of chauffeuring kids ranges from an estimated low of \$788 to an average of \$1,742 per driver per year.ⁱⁱ

OEC forwards solutions that not only meet environmental goals, but also support a sustainable economy and social equity. Youth transit is a perfect example. It will curb pollution, lead to a better-educated workforce because of improved school attendance, and particularly help low-income families.

OEC hopes you agree that these proposals provide great bang for the buck and urges you to support funding for youth's transportation needs this session. Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ *Evaluating Household Chauffeuring Burdens: Understanding Direct and Indirect Costs of Transporting Non-Drivers*, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, January 2015.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*