

## **AARP Testimony on 2017 Transportation Bill HB 2017**

AARP Oregon commends the Joint Committee of Transportation Preservation and Modernization for its leadership and hard work on crafting HB 2017. We believe this package is a good start to expanding mobility and transportation options in our communities, making our streets safer for all users, and advancing transparency and accountability in our system.

Safe, reliable, accessible and affordable transportation options are vitally important to make our communities great places to live, work and play for people of all ages and abilities. Being able to get around easily and safely, whatever the mode, is critical for older adults to remain active, independent and engaged members of our community. Although everyone benefits from having multiple transportation options, it is especially important for older adults, people with disabilities, lower-income Oregonians, and others who cannot or choose not to drive. Fifty percent of older adults say they could not continue living in their current neighborhood if they could no longer drive.

### **Investing in Public Transit**

Transportation is the vital link that connects older adults to social activity, economic opportunity, and community services that support their independence. Without it, people are less able to remain in their homes and communities as they age. The investment in public transit proposed by HB 2017, while still short of the growing need for transit services, will go a long way in meeting increasing demand and connecting communities. Investments in public transit will help provide more reliable, expanded transportation options especially for lower-income working families who rely on public transportation and seniors and people with disabilities who don't drive. Consistent and stable funding will benefit both urban and rural communities and enable transit districts to increase frequency, offer enhanced hours, upgrade buses and facilities, and expand routes to underserved rural areas and connect communities through inter-city buses.

### **Safe Streets**

Every two hours, a pedestrian in the United States is killed because a street or crosswalk is unsafe. Children, seniors, people of color and the low-income are disproportionately the victims of these fatalities. The proposed investment in Safe Routes to School is a good start to help kids safely walk and bike to school, but we believe it should do more. With neighborhoods schools as the centers of communities, safe routes to schools is the lynchpin to safe streets in our

communities. We would like to see street projects approved for a mile radius of school instead of the proposed ¼ mile. We would also like to see prioritization of safety projects for Title 1 schools that typically serve lower-income communities which are often the neighborhoods that lack adequate pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

### **Multimodal Transportation**

The package goes a long way to fixing state, county and city roads, as well as funding important freight infrastructure, not only for those who experience traffic congestion driving in the Portland Metro area on a daily basis, but stakeholders all over the state who care about a vibrant state economy and want better freight movement have called for removing bottlenecks in the Portland region. However, while congestion relief through road widening projects may indeed be needed, we also want to point out that research shows that widening roads is not a long term solution for congestion relief or better health outcomes. Therefore, we stress the need for using existing road space more efficiently and urge greater investment in multimodal transportation and coordination locally that prioritize sustainability, fosters long-term affordability in our communities, and makes replacing trips in private vehicles with walking, bicycling, and public transportation safe and convenient.

### **Equity, Transparency and Accountability**

AARP Oregon believes that taxes should be equitable and consider people's ability to pay, produce revenue to sustain important programs for individuals 50-plus and their families, as well as all Oregonians in need, and be simple for taxpayers to understand and comply with. We urge the legislature to consider these principles when making decisions regarding financing for this transportation initiative. In addition, we applaud legislators for including a number of provisions in HB 2017 that will increase accountability and provide Oregonians more transparent information about how their tax dollars are being spent to improve the way people and goods get around. Finally, we would like to see the package further strengthened through additional provisions that mitigate the regressive nature of some of the proposed revenue options to those most impacted. These provisions could include criteria-based project selection for streets and highway, prioritizing Title 1 schools for safe streets projects, ensuring a low-income fare for transit riders, and ensuring that investments foster long-term affordability in our communities and provide options for people who may not be able to own a car.

Oregon needs reliable, safe, affordable and accessible transportation options. Whatever way we get around, mobility and transportation options are fundamental for vibrant, livable communities and helping people of all ages live active, independent and engaged lives. HB 2017 is a good start to helping to meet our states growing transportation needs and making sure that our roads and streets and transportation system work for everyone. AARP thanks you for your leadership and commitment to expanding transportation options for all Oregonians and making our state a great place to live for people of all ages.