



To: Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
From: Margaret Tallmadge, The Coalition of Communities of Color
Re: HB 2017-3

June 6, 2017

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer, McKeown, Boquist, Bentz and Committee Members:

The Coalition of Communities of Color, supports establishing equitable, safe, affordable, and healthy 21st century people-focused transportation for Oregonians.

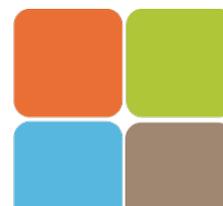
The CCC is an alliance of 18 culturally-specific community based organizations working to advance racial justice by addressing socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity in services. We are a diverse coalition of community leaders, organizers, direct service providers, business owners, and low-income advocates that represent a broad cross section of communities in Oregon. Safe and complete streets and public transportation accessibility and affordability frequently rise to our community's top priorities.

Environmental and climate justice acknowledges that the quality of our environment affects our lives and negative environmental effects should not disproportionately burden low-income people, people of color, and other historically marginalized communities. Transportation inequities are particularly pervasive manifestations of injustice, as they directly result in limited opportunities for positive healthy outcomes and perpetuate air toxics and global warming. In families that already face barriers in housing, educational attainment, economic stability and employment, public transportation can be a lifeline to help alleviate staggering expenses and increase pathways out of poverty, including education.

Traffic deaths are up from 2013, and increased auto-centric infrastructure means communities already near high traffic corridors will face increased air pollution. Our current auto-centric transportation system has many direct adverse health consequences, which disproportionately impact low-income communities and people of color. Auto-centric investments result in increased asthma, disincentives for physical activity and the associated rise in obesity and chronic illnesses, not to mention climate change. Modern transportation funding makes sense. Oregonians need **modern, connected** transportation systems with **safe, affordable, and healthy** options for everyone.

Transportation is Oregon's largest pollution source, yet our state budget contribution to public transit operations is far below the national average. Affordable and accessible transit that is thoughtfully planned to minimize environmental impacts should not have the goal to move people faster and farther, but to offer more options, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase access to all the opportunities and amenities necessary for a healthy life: jobs, housing, education, family, community, health, and recreation.

Accessible and affordable public transportation also makes economic sense. As the second largest household expense, neighborhoods with good access to transit save residents \$200 per month compared with car-dependent neighborhoods. Expanding and improving transportation options can serve as a boost to our economy because it will not only create new jobs to build and run the system, but will spur





economic development around rail stops, transportation centers and bus lines. Investments in public transit create more jobs than equivalent investments in road and bridge projects.

What must be prioritized in our transportation investments?

- Funding transit service for all Oregonians so they have affordable options and transit passes for young people to get to schools, jobs and activities, which sets kids up for greater success in life.
- Maintenance of existing roads and bridges to increase safety of neighborhoods before expansion of expensive highway projects.
- Expanding the Safe Routes to School program to reach more children to create safe places to walk, bike and access transit to school. Prioritize schools with the highest rates of students receiving free/reduced lunch.
- Dedicating increased revenue to making biking and walking safe and meeting the goals of the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- Setting a statutory goal of zero serious traffic injuries and fatalities and establish a broad task force designed to help build consensus around shared safety goals.
- Providing funding for electric buses in transit districts, and provide subsidies to help low and moderate income families transition to lower maintenance and operational costs of electric vehicles.

Finally, in line with our principles of equity and environmental justice, we must address the regressive nature of the employee payroll wage tax of .01% to fund transit operations, and to push for strong criteria and assurances that the funds will be utilized by transportation agencies for *operations* first and foremost, and that the community must be engaged in decision making for accountable use of these funds. While .01% may not seem like a lot-- this is significant to households that already struggle to put food on the table, keep a roof over their heads, and send their children to school. Literally every penny counts. This transportation package must prevent harm, provide benefit and ensure inclusive and accountable decision making with those often most impacted by transportation policy: communities of color, low-income communities, and rural Oregonians.

The Coalition of Communities of Color urges you to ensure Oregon has a **modern** transportation system that provides **more options** for **everyone**—with *equitable* funding mechanisms, *well-maintained* roads and bridges, *convenient* public transportation, *safe* places to walk and bike, and *clean* vehicles. One that helps workers get to where jobs are; one that lets children walk and bike *safely* to and from school; and one that allows older Oregonians and people with disabilities to get where they need to go.

Please contact maggie@coalitioncommunitiescolor.org if you have any questions.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Tallmadge".

Margaret Tallmadge
Environmental Justice Manager
Coalition of Communities of Color

