

17 December 2021

Dear Governor Brown and the Oregon Transportation Commission,

The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed into law on November 15th, 2021, bringing a multi-billion dollar, once-in-a-generation investment of funds to Oregon to address transportation infrastructure needs. We want to express our appreciation to the Oregon Congressional delegation, President Biden, and Congress for passing this much-needed legislation for an increase in transportation funding.

If properly implemented, this historic legislation will provide tens of thousands of family-wage jobs, stimulate statewide economic growth, address decades of systemic racial injustice, tackle Oregon's carbon pollution, provide more people with more choices, and make much needed improvements to our transportation system.

This is a unique opportunity for Oregon's transportation decision-makers to demonstrate climate and equity leadership while creating good family-wage jobs in allocating funding for statewide transportation infrastructure. Our transportation system produces nearly [40% of Oregon's GHG pollution, kills nearly 500 people in Oregon every year](#), disproportionately burdens low-income and Black, Indigenous and communities of color with toxic air pollution, and fails to fully serve the 1 in 3 Oregonians who can't or don't drive. Oregon will not meet its climate goals, nor address transportation inequities if we continue funding the status quo. **We need to do more than shore up this system; we need a full overhaul.**

The [Clean and Just Transportation Network](#) brings together more than 35 statewide transportation experts, environmental justice, community-based organizations, climate groups, and allies in the labor movement. We are working to advance and implement equitable transportation policies that dramatically reduce carbon emissions, address historic injustices, create good family-wage jobs, and build a transportation system that is safer, healthier, more affordable, and more reliable for everyone. We have come together to give you examples from around the state with what we would like to see leaders in Oregon prioritize with this historic investment of more than \$1 billion available over the next five years. All of these suggestions are in line with ODOT's Strategic Action Plan. We are available and eager to discuss further details and ways to spend transportation funds equitably and sustainably in our communities.

While there are funds assigned explicitly to transit, active transportation, EV-charging infrastructure, and climate mitigation, there are opportunities in every funding category of IIJA to maximize climate and equity benefits while supporting an efficient system.

**The approach to funding should be guided by these essential principles:**

- Given the restrictions on Highway Trust Fund spending from state-generated revenue, it is imperative that we use these federal funds as much as possible in the kinds of projects and programs that can't be funded through the HTF.

- Apply a climate and equity lens to all categories of investments, not just the climate-specific category. Investments should be evaluated for their impacts on vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Successful implementation of these funds must include investments in apprenticeship, and pre-apprenticeship programs and ensure that women and BIPOC communities have pathways into these programs.

#### **Examples of the approach that can be taken:**

- **Focus on safety and maintenance of the existing transportation system.** A “fix-it-first” approach directs more infrastructure money into family-wage jobs, and is a financially responsible approach to addressing our crumbling infrastructure. This approach also ensures infrastructure dollars are prioritized to [communities in rural Oregon](#).
- **Add money into existing active transportation grant programs**, such as Safe Routes to School and Community Paths, that always have more great applications than funding to fulfill them.
- **Retrofit ODOT’s “orphan highways”** in urban areas across the state with pedestrian and bicycle improvements, traffic calming, and transit access.
- **Invest in transit between communities.** From high speed rail connecting Portland to Puget Sound, to frequent passenger rail throughout the Willamette Valley, to increasing bus service statewide, intercity transit provides expanded access and more transportation choices for people across the state, and is a lifeline for many rural communities.
- **Leverage bridge projects to create key connections for transit, walking and biking networks.** With hundreds of seismically vulnerable bridges across the state in need of repair and replacement, Oregon has an opportunity to ensure any retrofit or replacement project is in line with our goals. Bridge replacement and repairs create an opportunity to make it much safer and more convenient to get around the state without driving. Bridges are key to functional transportation networks for all modes and whenever they are repaired or replaced, safe, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access should be prioritized.
- **Equitably transition to electric transportation technologies, by securing comprehensive transportation electrification projects that improve the health and economic inequities** created by the transportation system such as lack of access to economic opportunity, while prioritizing the needs of low-income communities and Black, Indigenous and communities of color that are disproportionately harmed by air pollution.
- **Prioritize public charging infrastructure** funding that scales charging stations in low-income communities, charging deserts, and high density areas: MUD, renters in single-family housing, right-of-way charging, rural areas, workplace charging, etc.
  - ODOT’s charging infrastructure needs report (TEINA) recommended expanding light-duty charging infrastructure in the state by 5x in the next 4 years (this doesn’t include medium- and heavy-duty charging).
- **Fund incentive programs that promote electrification for all vehicle types and e-mobility technology:** e.g., light-duty passenger vehicles, medium/heavy-duty

vehicles, e-bikes and scooters, transit, school buses, agricultural and port equipment, etc. Purchases should also follow the US Employment Plan when possible.

- **Fund outreach and education** as well as technical assistance in undersubscribed communities and municipalities to accelerate electrification efforts.

We know that funding from the IJJA is not enough to solve all our challenges in the transportation sector. We continue to support the passage of the Build Back Better Act, funding from legislative appropriations, and agency programs that prioritize people, climate, family-wage jobs, and equitable outcomes for a transportation system of the 21st century.

The undersigned members of the [Network](#) and other aligned community partners encourage you to utilize this once in a generation opportunity to focus on building a future multimodal transportation system that works for Oregonians -- one that is equitable, safe for people of all ages and abilities, and climate-smart in reducing vehicle miles traveled and electrifying the rest.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Members and Partners of the Clean and Just Transportation Network:

Victoria Paykar  
ClimateSolutions

Rhett Lawrence  
Forth

Sara Wright  
Oregon Environmental  
Council

Vivian Satterfield  
Verde

Brett Morgan  
1000 Friends of Oregon

Doug Allen  
Association of Oregon Rail  
and Transit Advocates  
(AORTA)

Rob Zako  
Better Eugene-Springfield  
Transportation (BEST)

Ashley Henry  
Business for a Better  
Portland

Anissa Pemberton  
Coalition of Communities  
of Color

Clair Clark  
Co-coordinator, 350 Salem  
OR

Bob Yuhnke  
Elders Climate Action,  
Oregon Chapter

Celeste Meiffren-Swango  
Environment Oregon

Vanessa Morelan  
EVHybridNoire

Amy Schlusser  
Green Energy Institute at  
Lewis & Clark Law School

Julie Chapman  
League of Women Voters  
of Oregon

Rich Peppers  
MCAT Transportation  
Committee

Daniel Frye  
Metro Climate Action Team  
(MCAT)

Chris Smith  
No More Freeways

Maia Vasconez-Taylor  
OPAL Environmental  
Justice Oregon

Charlie Fisher  
Oregon State Public  
Interest Research Group

Aaron Brown  
Portland: Neighbors  
Welcome

Dana Greenblatt  
Rogue Action Center

Paxton Rothwell  
Sunrise PDX

Cassie Wilson  
Sunrise Rural Oregon

Neil Baunsgard  
The Environmental Center

Sarah Iannarone  
The Street Trust

CC:

*Members of the Oregon Joint Committee on Transportation*

*Oregon Department of Transportation*

*Department of Environmental Quality*

*Environmental Quality Commission*

*Oregon Department of Energy*

*Oregon Public Utility Commission*

*TriMet*

*Metro Council*

*Cascades East Transit*

*Lane Transit District*

*Central Lane MPO*

*Portland Bureau of Transportation*

*Cherriots*

*Regional Area Commissions on Transportation*