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June 23, 2015

Senator Chris Edwards, Chair
Senate Special Committee on Sustainable Transportation
State Capitol
Salem, OR

Re: HB 2281B, -B7 amendments: Proposed Transportation Package

Dear Chair Edwards and Committee Members:

1000 Friends of Oregon is a Board member of the Oregon Transportation Forum (OTF) and a member of Transportation for Oregon's Future, most of whose members are also members of the OTF. OTF is a very broad-based nonprofit organization made up of over 40 members, including local and regional governments, transit agencies, ports, 1000 Friends of Oregon, AAA Oregon/Idaho, railroads, the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, the Oregon Trucking Association, business organizations, environmental organizations, and entities from around the state. Transportation for Oregon's Future is a coalition of organizations focused on fair funding for walking, bicycling, and transit. **We believe that Oregonians deserve both a better process and a better transportation package.**

OTF members and other interested parties spent much of 2014 developing a proposal that would provide equitable financial and policy support for *all* modes of passenger and freight transportation: air, rail, marine, walking, transit, auto, bicycling, trucking. We arrived at our proposal through months of research, sub-group meetings, reports to and discussions with the full group, and voting.

Many legislators, including the chairs of the House and Senate transportation committees, were kept informed as the OTF proposal developed and in fact, some legislators attended some meetings. The Governor's office was also kept informed. In fact, the OTF process was quite open and broad-based.

The OTF proposal is balanced and relies on fair funding mechanisms, including an increase in the gas tax to be devoted primarily to repairing Oregon's roads and bridges, and adequate lottery bond funding for all non-highway transportation modes. This would fund infrastructure for walking, bicycling, transit, air, marine, and freight and passenger rail.

1000 Friends supports the OTF proposal, and in particular has focused on its non-roadway elements to ensure funding mechanisms and policy changes that will create safer neighborhoods with better access to jobs, services, schools, healthy food and recreation. With other Transportation for Oregon's Future members, we have advocated for the following as elements of fair transportation legislation:

- ✓ Funding for safe sidewalks and streets as part of a statewide commitment to VisionZero - a goal of zero serious transportation injuries and fatalities.
- ✓ Funding for expansion of the walking and bicycling network.
- ✓ Equitable funding for transit operations.
- ✓ Sufficient funding for elderly and disabled transit.
- ✓ Statewide youth transit initiative.
- ✓ Fixing existing roads and bridges.

Oregonians deserve a fair and balanced transportation system linked to land use planning. Only about ¼ of all trips Oregonians make are between home and work; most of our trips are going to places like the grocery store, school, the hardware store, and other services. About half of all our trips are less than 5 miles, and most of those are even less than 3 miles. These are trips that many can make, and would make, by walking, bicycling, on a bus, or even by a shorter car trip – if they have safe and accessible sidewalks, transit services, bikeways, and a repaired street network. The average annual cost of owning a car is almost \$9000. Adequate funding for transit, walking, and bicycling facilities saves all Oregonians money if they do not need a car or a second car, or even if they just drive less; saves taxpayers dollars on unnecessary roads; reduces air pollutants; and creates livable neighborhoods. It also provides transportation options for the 25% of all Oregonians who do not drive at all – primarily due to age or physical disability.

The transportation package proposed by some legislators was developed in closed meetings without public sharing of information and ideas, and without public hearings and testimony until the package was revealed. While we appreciate that a bi-partisan group of legislators proposed a package that includes a dedicated source of funding for transit – something Oregon sorely needs – we have significant concerns that the package is not balanced:

- It would unfairly shift the burden of paying for a public good – transit – to employees.
- It would fund only a handful of transit districts - those in the Portland metropolitan and Eugene/Springfield areas. The proposal would not help transit in Oregon’s six other metropolitan regions – Salem-Keizer, Rogue Valley, Corvallis, Bend, Albany and Milton-Freewater – or in rural areas, which also need improved transit service and the enhanced access to jobs and services that it supports. Existing transit providers, and their customers, from the north coast to eastern Oregon would be left out.
- It would increase vehicle registration, license, and title fees, which are unrelated to how much someone drives – that is, you could not save money by driving less. Therefore, these would make no contribution to transportation policy goals of reducing vehicle miles traveled or greenhouse gas emissions. And, these fee increases would impact the poor harder because the fees are a lump sum payment.
- The proposed tax would be a percentage of one’s wages – which would hit lower and middle income workers harder than higher income ones.

- Funding for Connect Oregon and its bicycle and pedestrian elements is not included in the -B7 amendments, and the funding level proposed in other bills this session is not adequate.
- There is no mention of funding for senior and disabled transit.
- The proposal does not address the transit needs of youth.
- It is unclear how much of the funds raised would go to fixing Oregon's existing bridges and roads, versus building new roads.
- It is difficult to discern what is included in the earmarked list of road projects in such a quick timeframe.

These are issues that should be discussed and grappled with. Again, we appreciate a bi-partisan effort to fund transit. **A transportation system that is truly multi-modal, fairly funded, and serves all Oregonians is essential for the long-term sustainability of Oregon.** We ask that you present a transportation package that serves these goals; we believe that Oregonians deserve both a better process and a better transportation package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Policy Director and Staff Attorney