

Date: March 26, 2025

Topic: Testimony Opposing HB 2153

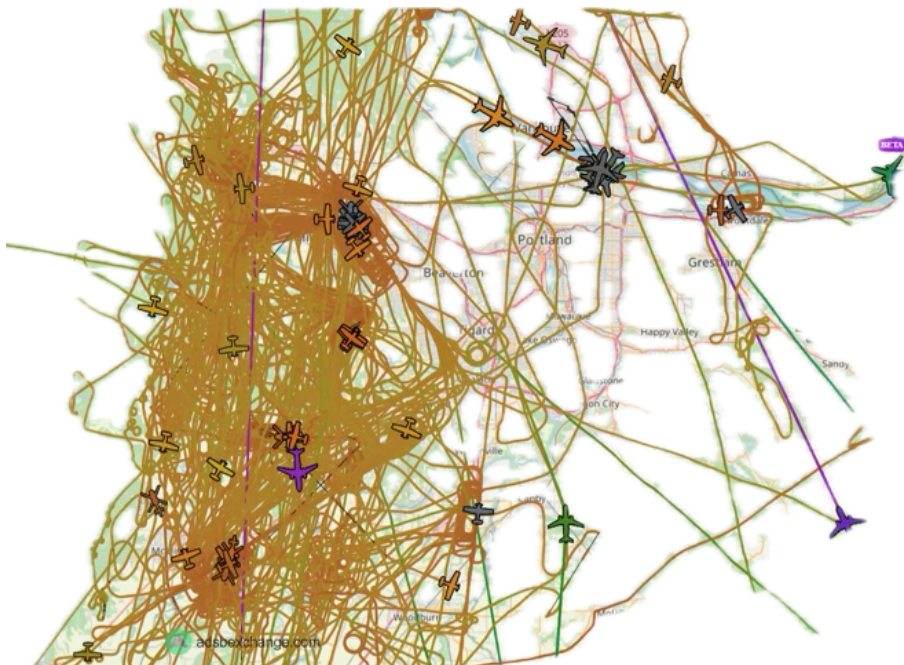
Dear Co-Chair Sen. Gorsek, Co-Chair Rep. McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Sen. Starr, Rep. Boschart Davis, Members of the Committee:

The Transportation Options section of the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) website promotes addressing climate change by choosing "active modes of transportation... Especially ones that emit less greenhouse gas emissions like biking, walking, rolling, scooters, carpooling, public transit, and passenger rail."

The benefits of reducing emissions by driving less included the following (paraphrased from the website): reduced greenhouse gas emissions, safer and quieter streets, improved physical and mental health, and less money spent on car payments, insurance premiums, and repair bills.

The webpage further explained that "While Oregon doesn't have goals or metrics for air travel yet, airplanes produce a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions; over 10% of Oregon's emissions when counting both passenger and freight flights. State agencies will work with our partners across the state to advance ways to reduce emissions in air travel." The wording of this statement does not address emissions released by General Aviation airports, so the actual amount of aviation produced emissions is likely much higher.

Below is an ADS-B screenshot of general aviation flight tracks produced over a two-hour period between 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM on 3/26/2025. Most were generated by student and private pilots flying over western Washington County, parts of Yamhill County and surrounding jurisdictions. The pilots flying out of airports such as Hillsboro, Stark's Twin Oaks, McMinnville, Scappoose, Aurora and others routinely blanket the entire area with relentless and unwelcome noise intrusions in combination with multiple releases of air pollutants - lead, benzene, PM2.5, and a host of other carcinogenic toxins. All have benefited from legislation promoted by the Oregon State Legislature. How exactly does funding Oregon's hobbyist, recreational and flight training airports contribute to Oregon's goals for reducing greenhouse gases?



Please bear in mind that the air traffic shown in the screenshot represents a small fraction of the noise and pollutants dumped on adversely impacted residents, especially since these flights occur - hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year.

HB 2153 proposes to increase taxes on aviation fuel for the sole purpose of operating and expanding airports, even though aviation is one of the most polluting forms of transportation on the planet. Despite the highly toxic nature of this mode of transportation, I am not aware of a single Connect Oregon, Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV) or ODOT grant addressing the noise, global warming, lead emissions, safety risks, security concerns and the host of carcinogenic toxins released by these airports.

While ODOT struggles with a billion dollar plus shortfall, Connect Oregon and the Oregon Department of Aviation continue to distribute generous sums of money to historically non-revenue producing General Aviation (GA) airports that primarily serve wealthy jet owners, charter jet companies, flight schools, private and recreational pilots.

According to the FAA Aviation Fuel Tax Action Plans and Status, "State or local taxes on aviation fuel...can only be expended for the capital or operating costs of the airport; the local airport system" and other aviation related projects. As a result of this stipulation, none of the money accrued through HB 2153 can be shifted to other less polluting transportation projects currently in danger of losing funding due to ODOT's budget crisis.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airports 2025-2029, states that there are 425 airports in Oregon (see pg. A-2). Of that number, 104 are categorized as public and 321 as private. More than 50 of Oregon's public use airports are slated to receive in excess of \$710 million in federal funding between 2025 and 2029. Since there are only 5 commercial airports in Oregon, most of the facilities that will benefit from this cash outlay will be GA airports.

One of the recipients is Independence Airpark, a residential airport owned and funded by the state for those wealthy enough to park an airplane in their driveway. Another is Mulino, a state owned recreational use airport best known for hosting a for-profit sky-diving business and flight training activity. Many GA airports such as Hillsboro, Troutdale, Scappoose, McMinnville, Bend Municipal and numerous others cater to flight training schools, private pilots and hobbyists while the public is routinely forced to subsidize these non-essential, noisy, highly polluting and disruptive airport activities.

Ironically, despite the generous federal hand-outs mentioned above, airport owners claim they are unable to come up with the 5-10% match required for FAA AIP funds. As a result they apply for grants through Connect Oregon and other ODAV funding programs. In so doing, they insure that the public gets dinged once again while roadways, bridges and other transit options that serve the majority of the population continue to deteriorate.

As mentioned earlier, only five of Oregon's public use airports are categorized as commercial facilities that provide airline passenger service. The remaining 99 primarily serve the approximately 10,000 Oregon pilots, less than 1/4 of one percent of the population, certified to fly out of these airports. Many are students recruited from overseas.

Needless to say, average Oregonians struggling to pay rent, mortgage, childcare expenses, college loans, medical bills, utilities, etc, have neither the means nor inclination to use Oregon's GA airports.

It's way beyond time for the general aviation community to end its chronic reliance on government handouts. This can be done by implementing landing and user fees and by

increasing registration and licensing fees for both aircraft owners and pilots. In addition, pilots and flight training students recruited from around the world to train at Oregon airports should be required to pay an annual registration fee.

Comments on ODAV Director Kenji Sugachara's 3/24/2025 Presentations

In his presentations on the various aviation bills, ODAV Director Kenji Sugachara mentioned the importance of firefighting. Given the growing risks of wildfires as a result of human caused climate change, this is indisputable. Efforts by ODAV to address these threats are commendable. At the same time, it is important to consider how much the promotion of fossil fuel burning aircraft and airports is contributing to the increase in extreme weather events in Oregon and around the globe.

In 2021, the National Academy of Sciences released a report, Options for Reducing Lead Emissions from Piston-Engine Aircraft. This document includes information from a 2020 pilot and aircraft owner survey conducted by the FAA. It included data on types of aircraft, number of hours flown and reasons for flying. Approximately 15,000 hours of flight time by piston-engine aircraft were reported that year. (See pgs. 31-35 for additional information on this topic. The findings are as follows:

- Air Taxis - 2%
- Business Transportation - 8%
- Personal and Recreational Use - Less than 45%
- Pilot Training - 40%
- Aerial Observation and Agricultural Services - Less than 2%
- Other Uses - 4% (This category included air and rescue, aerial firefighting, police aviation, traffic reporting, and emergency medical airlifts as well as air tours, sightseeing, airshows, parachute jumping and air racing.)

Fire-fighting accounted for 1-2% of the piston-engine flight hours logged. The survey revealed that the biggest users of GA airports were private and recreational flyers, student pilots, and business transportation flights which, combined, accounted for 94% of all hours flown by piston engine aircraft.

Finally, I would like to comment on how short-sighted it is to lobby for airport funding based almost exclusively on the amount of money that can be leveraged through federal grants. It is concerning that a general aviation airport receiving a 90 to 95% federal grant can't come up with enough money to cover a 5 or 10% match even after years, if not decades, of receiving government handouts. This situation suggests that general aviation airports, most of which are non-revenue generating, are not viable business investments—especially given the resistance of the pilots that use these facilities to pay landing and user fees to cover the costs of their expensive hobbies, transportation costs, and businesses.

It is also important to note that in the majority of Oregon's 36 counties, GA airports are the largest facility sources of lead emissions. HIO ranks 8th in the nation among 20,000 U.S. airports in lead emissions. Bend Municipal and Troutdale are also among the top 100 lead polluting airports in the country. They are also significant sources of noise and toxic pollution.

I am also entering, as part of my testimony, this 2/14/2025 Oregon Aviation Watch article, Oregon Overfunds Aviation at the Expense of Other Forms of Transportation, which discusses the significant decline in operational counts at Oregon's commercial airports in recent years.

For all the reasons discussed above, I adamantly oppose HB 2153.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Miki Barnes
Oregon Aviation Watch