



**SENATE DEMOCRATIC OFFICE  
SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICE**

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## **Protecting Oregonians on Public Transit**

*Senate Bill 1553 expands the existing crime of Interfering with Public Transportation to include drug use*

**SALEM, OR** – Today, the Oregon Senate passed [Senate Bill 1553](#) with bipartisan support. The bill would expand the existing crime of Interfering with Public Transportation to include drug use on public transit. This would be a drug-designated Class A misdemeanor, which would open up access to state-funded treatment for those convicted of the crime in many cases.

“As someone who takes public transit in my community, I understand why it’s so important for us to take action,” said **Senator Chris Gorsek (D - Gresham)**, co-chief sponsor of the bill. “Oregonians deserve to be safe on public transit. Our kids, people with disabilities, seniors, and people just trying to get to work should not have to worry about being exposed to smoke and residue from illicit drugs.”

Drug use on public transit is significantly impacting Oregonians across the state. TriMet reports a [30% drop in riders feeling safe on buses and trains](#). The Tillamook County Transportation District was forced to [close their transit center](#) to the public because of drug use and drug smoke exposure incidents. Schools are reporting that [students are finding drug paraphernalia](#) on transit vehicles provided by ride connection partners.

“Everyone deserves to feel safe in their community, but the growing presence of public drug use and crime has made it nearly impossible. Public transportation has greatly struggled with safety particularly in our major cities, and it’s long-past time for rehabilitation. Recriminalizing to

a Class A misdemeanor sends a strong message that public transit is not a welcoming place to illicit drug use, creating a safer environment for all,” said **Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp (R - Bend)**, co-chief sponsor of the bill.

“As we look to address the drug crisis as a whole, this is one of the many tools we need to be using to intervene in dangerous situations, such as smoking fentanyl on a transit bus. At the same time, it is important that the state work hand-in-hand with our cities and counties to build a more robust treatment system if we’re going to truly solve this problem,” said **Senator Floyd Prozanski (D - Springfield & Eugene)**, who co-carried the bill on the floor of the Senate.

Senate [Democrats](#) and [Republicans](#) agree that improving public safety is a major priority for the 2024 legislative session. SB 1553 now heads to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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