



CITY OF
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OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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Representative Caddy McKeown, Chair
House Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair McKeown and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering the important issue of accelerated road deterioration as a result of studded tire use. As noted in the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) recently released *Review of Studded Tires in Oregon*, the Portland Metro Region is disproportionately affected by the impacts of studded tires due to our high volume of traffic. I applaud Representatives Greenlick and Keny-Guyer for introducing these measures, and I would like to suggest that the Committee consider an approach that takes into account the disproportionate impacts of studded tires across Oregon.

The good news is that technologies are improving, vehicles and tires are safer and use of studded tires is down. More vehicles have four wheel drive, and there have been significant advances in non-studded winter tire technology. The traction of studless tires outperforms studded tires almost all of the time, and studded tires have less traction and poorer performance on bare pavement. When most users of studded tires "put them on in November and December and take them off in March and April," as found during an ODOT survey, this is significant. ODOT's *Review of Studded Tires* noted a decline in studded tire use from 16 percent of registered vehicles in 1995 to around 4 percent in the 2013-2014 winter season.

The bad news is that studded tires continue to contribute to dangerous rutting and roadway damage. ODOT's study found for 2012 an estimated of \$27 million in total damage due to studded tire use. The study also found that the effective damage, which includes the reduction in the useful life of pavement surfaces, is \$8.5 million statewide with over half of that impact realized in the Portland Metro Area. Moreover, the study only addressed impacts to the state highway system and did not take into account the impact on county and city roads.

Due to the disproportionate impact of studded tire use across the state, I would like to suggest the committee consider the narrow approach of lifting the preemption on local government regulation and taxation of studded tires. By allowing local governments to tax or ban use of studded tires, local governments could recoup costs while not penalizing drivers in areas with less road damage and a greater need for studded tire technology. In the Portland Metro area, there may be interest in taxing or regulating studded tires used by vehicles registered within city, county or regional limits, or by simply adopting point-of-sale taxes. One example of how this might work: the three Metro counties could each agree to adopt a similar point-of-sale tax. The taxes or regulations would not affect people who live elsewhere and drive to Portland. Any revenue would be used to help address local governments' road

maintenance backlog, which includes the significant damage caused by studded tires. This kind of an approach would respond to local needs much the same way the DEQ Emissions Testing program addresses local air quality needs.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer questions about this proposed approach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Novick', written in a cursive style.

Steve Novick
Commissioner