

To Members of the Senate Business and Transportation Committee

SJR 16

I am writing to express my strong support for SJ 16 as the first step in allowing vehicle tax funds to be used for purposes that reduce traffic or improve safety without being committed to further highway expansion.

In an era when climate change is becoming a central concern, measures that can divert trips from the highways are usually more cost effective, and certainly more consistent with climate change goals than blindly adding more pavement. It would be supremely ironic if future Carbon Tax or other tax moneys could only be used to expand highways !

As a retired transportation engineer, I have watched with concern as we continue to approve unnecessary road expansion. For instance, about a third of the cost of the Sellwood Bridge project is attributable to building a massive, freeway style interchange on ODOT's Highway 43. Yet there will be no more traffic lanes on any of the approaches, rendering this disruptive part of the project largely irrelevant. An improved intersection would have been far more appropriate. Or OPDOT's frequent installation of a variety of changeable message signs that are hardly a cost effective use of highway funds, require support staff to operate, and convey very little useful information which is already available on the radio.

Meanwhile there is nowhere safe to walk or bike along Highway 43. A sidewalk and bike lanes could have been build for a fraction of the cost of the Sellwood Interchange, and by contrast, would have encouraged a reduction in traffic and improvement in bike and pedestrian safety.

In an era when traffic growth (expressed as miles per capita) is leveling off, the State's investment strategy should be encouraging this trend, not fighting it by continuing to expand highways.

In the years to come numerous projects will come forward that could mitigate our excessive dependance on road expansion. For instance reducing traffic at the CRC might include upgrading the railroad bridge, and adding commute rail service from the Clark County Railway.

In Portland new bike bridges over I 405 (such as at Flanders) would encourage greater use of bikes for inner city trips, reducing traffic accordingly.

And on the inner East side, traffic and circulation would improve immeasurably if the main railroad were relocated into a trench, eliminating some 14 grade crossings.

And the list goes on and on. I really hope this committee will forward SJR 16 for broader consideration, and eventually adoption and referral to voters.

Sincerely,

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