

House Committee on Transportation Policy
Oregon Legislature
Salem, Oregon

April 5, 2017

Dear Chair McKeown and Committee Members,

My name is Meeky Blizzard. I have been a resident of Washington County since 1978 and have been involved in local, regional, and national transportation and land use issues for nearly 20 years. Most recently, I served as the Co-Chair of Washington County's Transportation Futures Study Advisory Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on HB 3231 today and would like to tell you why I oppose it.

First of all, Oregon does not need the creation of a special taxing district to finance the acquisition, design, construction, installation, operation, maintenance, and repair of limited-access public highway projects. We already have an accepted and robust process for identifying and building needed transportation projects – a process that involves affected jurisdictions and adheres to the state's land use planning program and environmental laws. Creating new transportation districts that reduce a county's authority over its land use plans and eliminates an MPO's ability to review or approve a new public highway makes absolutely no sense.

Secondly, as you well know, the current backlog of transportation needs – starting with badly needed maintenance and repairs – far surpasses current funding levels. Washington County alone has nearly 4 billion dollars of unmet transportation needs. Creating new special districts to build limited access public highways will only exacerbate that problem, even with the district's ability to contract with private interests to construct, operate, and maintain a new road. Surely, Oregonians want our current roadway network fixed before being taxed to pay for a new multi-billion dollar limited-access highway.

Thirdly, building new limited-access highways to ease traffic flow is simply a waste of money. Evidence from metropolitan regions around the US demonstrates that building new freeways doesn't reduce congestion; it only opens new avenues for people to drive further. Do we really want people to make longer commutes – at the expense of some of the best farmland in the nation?

Finally, technology is quickly transforming the tools available to address not only traffic congestion, but the even the need to travel. Whether it's instantly coordinated traffic signals, self-driving cars, vehicle-to-vehicle communication, 3D printing, privately-owned vehicles, or a technology not yet invented, our transportation system will be transformed within the next decade. Why should we even think about investing tens of billions of dollars in a new limited-access freeway that won't be ready for at least 20 years?

I urge you to oppose HB 3231.

Sincerely,



Meeky Blizzard
16815 SW Pleasant Valley Road
Beaverton, OR 97007
meeky.blizzard@gmail.com