



PROTECTING YOUR
RIGHT TO ROAM

June 7th, 2017
Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: State Transportation Package - HB 2017-3

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Beyer and Rep. McKeown, and Committee Members,

My name is Noel Mickelberry, and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Walks, the state's pedestrian advocacy organization. We work to make walking safe, convenient, and attractive for everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2017-3, and the effort that has gone into developing the proposal in front of us today.

The urgent need for robust and immediate action toward addressing climate change and climate justice is clear, and this package leaves Oregonians behind in building a livable future. Just this year, a report was released showing that transportation causes over 1/3 of our state's greenhouse gas emissions – and we are failing in our attempts to curb these emissions by 2020. While there are critical investments included in this package that we support, there are even more concerns with what type of projects are prioritized, how these projects are funded, and who stands to benefit. **The current level of funding for transit, biking, and walking is a bare minimum - and we urge the committee to address the following concerns within this package:**

Addressing congestion

Overall, this package prioritizes massive investments in roadway expansions as well as earmarked projects across the state with no clear connection back to identified prioritization processes or as the right solutions to community needs. The earmarks alone are more than double the total statewide investment in transit, bicycling, and pedestrian needs. In addition, it is unclear whether these earmarked projects are meeting helping us reach our climate goals, or address a clearly identified community need.

There is no doubt that congestion is a concern around the state. However, roadway expansion as a congestion mitigation relief effort is an outdated and ineffective solution to a real problem that our communities face to accessing jobs, school, and basic needs. The percentage of the overall package going toward real congestion mitigation - providing people with transportation options like transit, walking, and biking - is extraordinarily low, approximately 10-11%. In addition, the clear need for increased transit operations funding to improve the frequency and reliability of



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transit (one of the most noted reasons Oregonians don't utilize this mode), is not guaranteed with how this bill is written. **It is unclear how this lopsided investment strategy is leading us toward a climate resilient future, nor a less-congested one.**

Revenue

Regressive taxation is the primary method for raising revenue in this package. One regressive taxing methodology may not seem problematic, but when you overlay them on one another, the impact is much greater. We see low-income families bearing the brunt of this funding proposal as wage-based, and flat taxes make up a larger portion of their income each month. Low-income families are the most likely to use walking and transit as their primary mode of transportation - and right now, this package disproportionately burdens these families, while failing to adequately invest in the transportation they need to meet their basic needs. **We must develop progressive funding streams in Oregon, and we must re-invest into community needs for mobility, safety, and access.**

Who will benefit:

We need to see a clear dedication toward ensuring that the people most impacted by transportation burdens in our state are the ones who stand to benefit from this package. There is currently zero focus in this package toward the ODOT identified and supported Transportation Safety Action Plan goal of zero fatalities in the state. As deaths in Oregon continue to rise, particularly among people on foot, older adults, and low-income communities - this is a vast oversight in how we meaningfully work toward ending this preventable epidemic. **At the minimum, this bill can incorporate a state level oversight committee dedicated to reaching zero deaths as brought forward by HB 2667.**

Our young people deserve to get to school safely. This bill falls short of what is necessary to invest in Safe Routes to School for every kid. **The clear path toward improving this is to incorporate the priorities laid out in HB 3230:** which includes a Title I school prioritization, making improvements within a one mile radius, flexibility on the local match requirement, removing the 10 year sunset, and increasing the funding total to 15 million to include education and encouragement, in addition to infrastructure improvements. **In addition, it will be critical to pass HB 2693 as a complement to the package, which will create a grant to cover youth transportation costs.**

Although we appreciate the intent behind the proposed efforts toward low-income mitigation requirements for transit agencies, we think the current bill language will miss the mark in implementation. The bill does not require transit agencies to clearly showcase how they are mitigating the impact of the new employee payroll tax, only a report on whether or not they used one of the four strategies presented. This also



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isn't required until after the agency receives funding. **This can easily be improved by a statement that transit agencies must identify the strategies in which they will mitigate the tax on low-income families, utilizing community input and including the four strategies currently proposed (listed on page 264).**

Looking to the future:

There is also a lot of opportunity in this package as we look toward the future, but the clarity on how this will be realized isn't yet included. We support the efforts to look forward at congestion pricing as a more progressive funding stream for transportation, but encourage this work to focus heavily on how the revenue will be spent, and who it will benefit. We appreciate the increased accountability and transparency measures put in place by this bill, but want to see stronger criteria for what that oversight looks like - including on how to prioritize future congestion projects, and a cost benefit analysis that is easily accessible constituents. We are pleased by the jurisdictional transfer agreements present in the bill, which will allow local jurisdictions to have more flexibility with increasing the safety on urban highways, but we still need to see dedicated funding toward the very needed improvements on these corridors - like SE Powell Blvd., in Portland.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment, and we look forward to a continued discussion on this important funding package, and how it will best serve all Oregonians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noel Mickelberry".

Noel Mickelberry
Executive Director