

Testimony Before the
Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
June 5, 2017

When the 2017 Legislature began looking at our state's transportation dilemma someone said we should to "go big or go home." Both Washington and California are going big.

Oregon's Rail program is treading water. The budget is tight, but we will continue to flounder without more leadership. Investment in rail and public transport are essential for our future economy.

In 2017 the **State of Washington** is:

- (1) adding eight new **125 mph Siemens Charger SC-44 locomotives** - the most modern and efficient, low emission diesel electric passenger locomotives in the world,
- (2) adding **new passenger-only, more direct trackage**, and a new centrally located **passenger station**, in the Tacoma area. Washington's corridor is double or triple tracked. Oregon is mostly single track.
- (3) adding **two additional round-trip frequencies** between Seattle and Portland.

Washington shows true leadership **and receives significant federal funding** because of that leadership. **Oregon will benefit** from Washington's investments. What is happening in California is even more impressive. Oregon is the missing link on the West Coast.

We adopted an impressive Climate Action Plan. And then we talk about freeway expansion and taxing low emission vehicles and bicycles -- actions that move us in the **opposite direction**.

Last month cities in Central Oregon, the Willamette Valley, and the Oregon coast, lost intercity public transportation because we are not doing our job.

Constitutional Amendment Referred to Voters. One important step we need to take will have no impact on the state budget, and potential for long-term budget relief. The Constitution ties our hands when spending transportation dollars from gasoline taxes and motor vehicle registration fees. The Legislature needs to refer to the voters an amendment that **allows** transportation dollars to be used for the **most effective transportation solution**, similar what is allowed in Washington and California.

Maintenance of existing infrastructure should be top priority. But funds for **new infrastructure** must be spent as wisely as possible. We need to encourage that public discussion. A Constitutional referral would help do that. Do we use tax dollars for the best possible solution, or do we force the same "solution" in every region? Adding more road capacity in urban areas **encourages sprawl and increases congestion and maintenance costs!** That is a recipe for long-term budget disaster..

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