

To: Joint Committee on Transportation
Chair Senator Lee Beyer
9/23/2020
RE: ODOT Congestion Management

From: Roberta Robles,
Transport Justice Advocate Extraordinaire.
Writing in Transit from Klamath Basin OR; caring for rural family,

RE: Congestion Management Plan,

In response to the presentation to the Oregon Transport Committee 9/23/20, I appreciate immediate distribution to the Joint Committee, despite not being within the 24 hour window. I hope this input is provided to the committee electronically.

I have the following concerns:

1. **Freeway Access Management vs Active Modes:** ODOT has serious communication issues regarding the term “active”. To some activists “active mode” means bicycling and walking and is referred to Active Mode in funding ‘buckets’.

To freeway engineers active management means turning the ramp signals on and off at peak periods. I request that ODOT change their terminology to “Freeway Access Management” “FAM” documents.

ODOT for the last 10 years has only produced one lane mile of active mode cycle and pedestrian lanes. Obscuring these two concepts had led to disinvest in critical active mode infrastructure and spike in Oregon road fatalities. Please review the actual Bike/Ped crossings and you will notice very long stretches of corridors with no bicycling or pedestrian crossings. Oftentimes these interchanges have the highest number of accidents to vulnerable road users.

Comprehensive Congestion Management Plan (Portland Region)

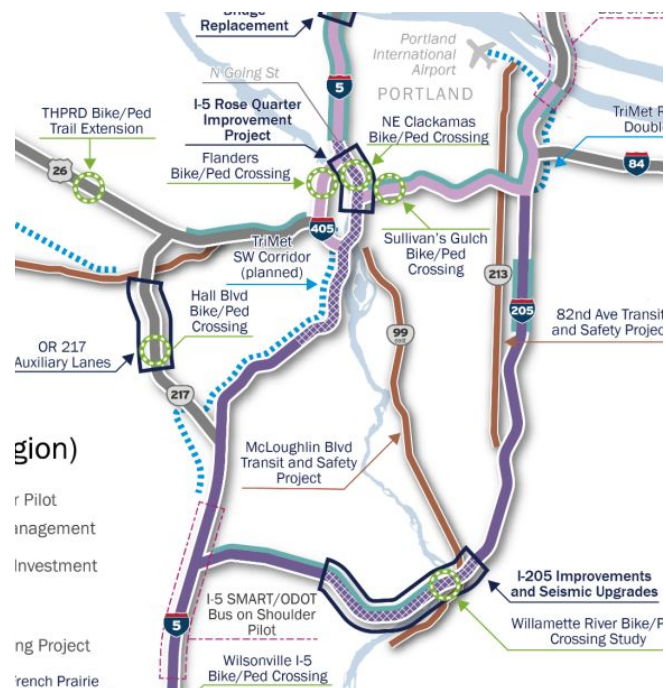


2. **Interchange Area Management Plans.** I encourage ODOT to use the Federal guidelines on Interchange Area Management Plans as the starting point of reference for the future Albina Community Engagement process. Anything outside of the scope of federal guidelines is a form of systemic racism; as it wastes community advocate times at meetings with no intention to use their input for the actual design of the Rose Quarter Improvement project. These plans are required to be updated for use as a community engagement tool to manage the traffic coming on and off the ramps into the local

community. This is the transition zone, from high speed on freeways to low speed in the neighborhoods. The goal is to slow down traffic coming off the freeway, not expand expensive interchange ramps and impact to local communities. It seems ODOT only cares about moving cars north and south on these corridors. There is little empathy for the community these corridors cut through.

3. **Congestion Fee Collection - Wider collection points:** I encourage state elected officials to take a statewide equity approach to freeway access to Portland. Look at the proposed current tolling locations, there are only 2 and both are directly adjacent to proposed freeway widening auxiliary lanes. I reject these locations and insist that the tolls be pushed more widely across the entire north and south of 205 and I-5 to reflect the congestion can and should be managed 'upstream' from the point of bottleneck. Plus it distributes the tolling impact across the entire freeway network. Please add tolling locations to:

- a. To the North toll I-5 at the CRC bridge
- b. To the East toll at I-84 toll cars accessing I-205 north and south bound.
- c. To the South toll at I-205 and I-5 junction.
- d. To the West toll at Highway 26 junction with I-405 and toll at Highway 217 junction.



4. Fundamentally reject the discussion of using congestion pricing funds to seismically upgrade any bridge. The ODOT Bridge Replacement Program regularly consumes up to 25% of the total ODOT budget every year. The Abernathy Bridge was not earthquake proof in the ODOT Bridge Replacement program because the Boone Bridge is considered a viable alternative in the event of an earthquake. Any seismic upgrade that includes substantial freeway widening is just that, an excuse or proxy to widen the freeway at congestion points instead of seeking equitable climate change solutions. Seismic upgrades and improvements to the existing rail lines into Clackamas county would be a far more efficient and equitable use of funds. Ongoing earthquake proofing prioritizes future lives over the existing traffic conditions. The fear of an earthquake and the accompanying 'seismic' upgrades that always includes an additional lane is a form of "Disaster Capitalism Complex" in Chapter 5 in Naomi Kleins book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* and is why I refer to ODOT right now as the freeway industrial complex. I reject the use of congestion management

fees for the widening, earthquake proofing or additional auxiliary lanes. This just feed\$ ODOT contractors; it doesn't relieve congestion.

5. Low Cost Congestion suggestions IGNORED:

If ODOT wanted to reduce congestion on these corridors they could reduce speeds to 45mph and close some on and off ramps near bottlenecks. This is the most cost effective solution and does not require congestion pricing. Based on the proposed distribution of the funds by ODOT staff, I am very weary of this program cyphoning community money to ODOT programs that are effectively obscuring and canceling community groups.

- a. Slow freeway speed to 45mph as this is the most efficient speed per lane of traffic.
- b. Remove some on and off ramps. At I-64 in St. Louis, in a geography similar to Portland 5 ramps were closed and the impacts of congestion on the urban community that also includes a ; large stadium, river, freeways and urban land use. This has proved successful at mitigating traffic, we want ODOT to be REQUIRED to review this option at the Rose Quarter.

In closing, I am deeply appreciative of the work to date in moving congestion pricing forward. The collection points need to be distributed across the entire network and geographically decoupled from additional auxiliary lanes and earthquake proofing. The goal of this fund is to mitigate traffic and congestion. It is not to fund the next cycle of freeway widenings couched as earthquake proofing.

We encourage Clackamas County to take a long hard deep look at their transport options. There are existing rail lines that could be extended. Any additional freeway widenings on 205 should be fundamentally rejected until this community comes to terms with its historic access and still available rail lines. I am also hopeful that a Ferry terminal in Oregon City is a more resilient solution than another auxiliary lane. The SW corridor stacks Max Stations next to I-5 interchanges, which will fundamentally clog all traffic, and I will be opposing the Metro 2020 package because of the poor alignment and the small town politicians who are selfish and morally unfit to serve on Metro's JPAC.

Freeways are not inter-modal, they specifically exclude pedestrians and cyclists. The only way for equity to move forward is if these modes were given Earthquake proofing funding in the future. Bike trails are more earthquake proof and climate resilient then fragile freeways and have provided essential transport options for the disadvantaged during the COVID pandemic. We demand over representation as reparation for past losses to walking and cycling infrastructure.

Freeways are fragile because one small bumper accident disproportionately backs up traffic a disproportionate impact relative to the initial incidence. This is why freeways are

hard to manage. Just because you can drive on a freeway doesn't mean you know how to manage a freeway network; Access Management at Interchanges is the most fundamental concept of transport planning that seems to get lost in equity conversations.

First and foremost taxpayers deserve a solution that will mitigate impact; not fund the next boondoggle.

We encourage ODOT staff to consider their days of freeway building over. All elected officials are put on notice; if Oregonians are to remain leaders in transport planning we must address the elephant in the room more freeways don't mitigate congestion, they were built to destroy Black neighborhoods under the guise of economic development.

Kind Regards
Roberta Robles