



Jessica Vega Pederson Multnomah County Commissioner

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Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair
Representative Caddy McKeown, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

March 6, 2019

Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown and other members of the Committee -

I strongly urge you to support HB 2702 as amended. My east Portland district is home to many of the most dangerous intersections and corridors in the city of Portland, and pedestrian fatalities are unfortunately a regular occurrence. Roads were not designed for the density of people now living in east Portland – they are too wide and vehicles move too fast. Providing flexibility for the city to more appropriately manage speed will help us eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries.

The fact is, speed kills. The chance a pedestrian will die when hit by a driver at 30 mph doubles when a person is hit at 40 mph.¹ Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for young people (ages 1-24) who suffer unintentional injuries in Multnomah County. Older adults (ages 75+) die from traffic crashes at nearly twice the rate of Multnomah County's population as a whole. Multnomah County's Public Health Advisory Board has identified traffic-related injury prevention as a public health priority for the County, and is urging all those with authority over our roadways to better account for pedestrian safety when designing our transportation system, which includes setting lower speed limits for vehicles.

Speed limits do make a difference. A recent study in Boston, where they lowered many streets from 30 to 25 mph, resulted in a 29 percent reduction in the odds of people driving 35 mph.² A similar reduction in speed limits along with the placement of an enforcement camera along outer SE Division Street has proven to be effective in reducing average speeds in the area.

¹ Tefft, B.C. (2011), "Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death," AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

² Hu, W. and J.B. Cicchino (2018), "Lowering the speed limit from 30 to 25 mph in Boston: effects on vehicle speeds," Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

As you know, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) currently controls speed limits on all public streets in Oregon. This can make it challenging for Portland and other local jurisdictions to set speed limits that support safer streets.

The amended bill before you would allow ODOT to delegate speed setting authority to urban jurisdictions. This is the first step in creating a process that will ensure a consistent statewide speed setting methodology and give urban areas more autonomy in setting safe speed limits based on the urban context.

In addition to this change, there is an ongoing state-led process to update Oregon's speed setting methodology. The administrative rule change resulting from this speed setting process should allow urban areas to efficiently set speeds that are responsive to different road users, the urban environment and crash history of the corridor, and set speeds that are consistent across similar street types. HB 2702 and this administrative rule change *will* help save lives.

We now know more about designing safer roadways and recognize that speed limits should account for the safety of everyone using a street. Allowing ODOT to delegate speed setting authority will enable local jurisdictions for the safety of all those that use a street. I strongly urge you to support this bill as amended, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Vega Pederson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Vega Pederson

Multnomah County Commissioner
