

Testimony of Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager
On House Bill 4017, -1 amendment
House Committee on Rules
February 25, 2020



Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Metro is the elected regional government that represents more than 1.6 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the greater Portland metropolitan area. As the metropolitan planning organization for the region, Metro is responsible for regional transportation planning as well as distribution of federal transportation dollars. The Metro Council carries out these responsibilities in partnership with the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT), which brings together elected officials from Metro and the cities and counties of the region as well as representatives of state and regional public agencies.

The Metro Council does not support the -1 amendment to HB 4017, which would divert funding from the Interstate 5 Rose Quarter project to the Interstate 205 project. While these two projects are both very important to Metro, taking funds from one project to fund the other does not solve the funding gap in the Portland region for major freeway bottleneck projects.

Metro and JPACT have long called for investment to relieve critical bottlenecks both at the Rose Quarter on I-5 and on I-205, as well as on Oregon Highway 217 in Washington County. All three of these projects are included in Metro's 2018 Regional Transportation Plan.

In fact, our region committed the first dollars to these projects. In June 2016, JPACT and the Metro Council agreed to bond against the federal transportation dollars known as Regional Flexible Funds to invest \$10 million in project development activities for these three freeway bottleneck projects. Among other things, this decision was intended to demonstrate to the Legislature the region's commitment to addressing these bottlenecks in the context of the transportation revenue package that was being developed for the 2017 session.

In 2017 we advocated strongly for funding in the transportation package to address all three of these bottlenecks. At the time, we made it clear that we believed the Rose Quarter project would cost more than the \$450 million that was allocated by the Legislature in HB 2017.

From its inception, the Rose Quarter project has consisted of more than merely the construction of so-called auxiliary lanes; it has always included elements intended to address the historic injustice suffered by Portland's African-American community with the construction of I-5. Metro has been working with the City of Portland, Multnomah County, the Albina Vision Trust and others to ensure that investments at the Rose Quarter achieve two key outcomes: not just congestion relief but also the physical reconnection of the Lloyd Center area to the Central Eastside in order to repair and connect communities divided by I-5, as laid out in the City of Portland's N/NE Quadrant Plan.

As it happened, HB 2017 included funding for the I-5 Rose Quarter project as well as OR-217, but not for I-205. We continue to support the I-205 project and strongly urge the Legislature to identify realistic funding sources to support its construction. While we support efforts to manage demand on the freeways of the Portland region through value pricing, we agree with our partners in

Clackamas County that such a program cannot be implemented quickly enough to advance the I-205 project in a timely fashion.

However, we cannot support the -1 amendment that is before you today, for a number of reasons.

- The funding solution for I-205 should involve growing the pie, not taking funding from one project to pay for another. The -1 amendment diverts a currently authorized funding stream, without any suggestion as to how the resulting shortfall for the Rose Quarter project will be addressed.
- Diversion of funds away from the Rose Quarter project without a solid plan to backfill the resulting shortfall will further delay the improvements needed to reconnect the community that was cut in two with the construction of I-5.
- Without improvements at the Rose Quarter, replacing the I-5 bridge over the Columbia River will fail to achieve the necessary transportation improvements that constitute the primary rationale for that critical project.
- ODOT has made significant progress on the Rose Quarter project over the past several months. The Oregon Transportation Commission is moving forward quickly with the project, while maintaining their commitment to Metro and other stakeholders to lead the project with community input and clear, transparent decision-making. Defunding the project at this critical stage jeopardizes the ability of multiple partners to maintain this momentum.
- While there has been significant publicity around the cost of the Rose Quarter project, inflation has also increased the price of the I-205 project since 2017. We do not believe the overall I-205 project can be built for the \$450 million currently allocated to the Rose Quarter.

The Metro Council believes that rather than the zero-sum approach represented by the -1 amendment, the Legislature should work toward a solution that can support timely construction of both the Rose Quarter and I-205 projects. We look forward to working with you, ODOT and with our regional partners to develop and advance that solution.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.