

TO: Joint Committee on Transportation
SUBJECT: ODOT Rose Quarter Cost to Complete Study
DATE: February 26, 2020

As you receive ODOT's Cost to Complete study for the I-5/Rose Quarter project, please keep in mind the following information:

ODOT and the Federal Highway Administration must develop a full Environmental Impact Statement in order to meet Federal requirements. Doing so will require an analysis of reasonable alternatives, including transit options or components, and demand management options or components, as well as fully analyzing the environmental effects of this project, including cumulative effects from previous and future highway expansion on I-5 and the connected Portland freeway network.

Although ODOT has performed a limited, and deficient "Environmental Assessment" that ODOT presumed was adequate to meet Federal requirements, it clearly is not adequate in multiple respects.

An adequate Environmental Impact Statement will allow Oregon to move forward with an environmentally responsible and equitable approach to providing mobility for people and freight, which the current project design fails to do.

In all probability, the cost for doing a responsible project will be much less than what ODOT has tallied up, but attempting to bully this project forward in its current design will only cause further delay and waste of money. Please direct ODOT to move forward with a full Environmental Impact Statement, hiring consultants who are honest brokers.

You should also direct ODOT to immediately implement "value pricing" on I-5 between the Washington State Line and where it meets I-205, as the Oregon Legislature directed in HB 2017 of the 2017 legislative session. Using the lowest levels of tolling necessary for freeway management, such value pricing will improve freeway speed, volume, and reliability with minimal diversion to adjacent streets. Time sensitive commuters and freight carriers will benefit immediately, our local economy will benefit, and those whose trips are less time sensitive can travel off-peak, when the tolls should be low or zero.

Note that ODOT's own studies show that tolling for freeway management is efficient and equitable, whereas tolling for paying project costs is inefficient, inflexible, and costly to implement, so don't even think about trying to use tolls to pay for the current project design. Any toll money should be allocated in an appropriate way after it has been received, not committed in advance to project construction.

Sincerely,
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