

To: Joint Committee on Transport 03/16/2010

Opposed to all legislation that confuses tolling with congestion management.

HB 2017 was passed with congestion management. It is a complete change from the intention of HB 2017 from congestion management to tolling. This is bait and switch.

Therefore, I am categorically opposed to all policy changes that confuses these two terms. The public needs to be educated as to WHAT congestion pricing is, not cajoled into a tolling project.

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Generally, agree with the testimony provided by Safe Routes to School and Verde. I mostly agree with Metro's response but am greatly discouraged by Metro's (Lynne Pederson) continuing support for a freeway widening at the Rose Quarter. Metro is not representing the views of Albina and minority populations.

HB 3065-5 (3/4/21)

Section 32: – remove private entity from operating congestion pricing long term. Private entities should not be running the congestion management scheme. We do not want a profit driven private company to drive up traffic congestion only to charge excessive fees during peak periods. The economic incentives are not balanced with a private entity, nor are they subject to the same equity oversight as a government entity.

HB 3065-5 (3/4/21) page 39 line 24 (a) – ODOT's estimates of present and future traffic patterns have not been subject to external review and reconciliation. ODOT has a long-term pattern of coming back to ask for more money from Oregon legislature, because of faulty projections we know to be induced demand. Even if ODOT had tolling funding, their capital projects wish list is so large that only an infinite amount of tolling money would fund the infinite list of projects ODOT is proposing.

Section 33 Report on Equitable Income Base Toll Rates

ODOT is not reliable enough to report on equity issues. We want the legislature to REQUIRE ODOT to CHANGE their work program to include input from minority populations. Right now, this amendment only requires ODOT to report on these impacts, but it doesn't actually require them to change their STIP programming to incorporate equity-based issues. In the past ODOT has used these reporting mechanisms to dismiss changing their business operations according to the intent of the legislation. If ODOT can call this a tolling project, ODOT will roll it out as a capitol works project that never ends.

Section 35 – Jurisdictional Transfer – This policy is an admission of ODOT's failure. Jurisdictional transfers can be viewed as an admission from ODOT that they cannot be relied upon to operate and maintain the existing state highways. They are foisting neglected state highways onto local jurisdiction and have spent the last decade trying to widen freeways instead. ODOT cannot be relied upon to manage tolling money responsibly. They have a history of bad management which is reflected in the jurisdictional transfer proposal. Local jurisdictions want to manage their own roads because ODOT does not listen to their desires and instead chooses to orphan or abandon these highways for the locals to deal with.

Section 36

Completely opposed to all labor changes until a response from AFSCME is considered. I do not know what this section is trying to achieve but tacking it onto a tolling legislation change is not appropriate.

The whole point of congestion pricing is to indicate to consumers that we want them to look for a different time of day to make their journey. Congestion pricing is a small fee imposed during peak congestion hours as a price point to signal to some drivers that if they moved their trips to different times of the day the trip would be free. This is using the existing highway system, with the goal of spreading peak hour trips to non-peak times. We do not want to collect tolls to build more highways. We want to collect tolls to encourage some trips to occur during non-peak hours. This is the most efficient use of the network and cannot be accomplished under a tolling program.

Tolling implies that a fee will be imposed no matter what time of the day the trip occurs. These fees collected during uncongested times are funneled into an economic spin cycle we call induced demand. The more tolls ODOT collects the more highway lanes it builds. This is not a GHG reduction plan. This is a capital projects list, not a congestion management plan.

Operating the state highway is not a “monumental challenge” as implied by Metro. The monumental challenge is building a freeway nobody wants. The only challenge is getting ODOT and Metro to listen to what the voters want. Oregonians want their local roads to run with integrity, not gaslighting the realities and issues of our current transport system.

Its increasingly disappointing to see Kotek attempt to negotiate a solution that goes against her own home district desires. We need better statewide leadership that reconciles the failings of HB 2017 with the realities of 2021 summer of racial justice protests. HB 2017 included project studies that were not fully vetted by the community. Implying that there is legislative and community support for these freeway projects is an egregious form of community gaslighting.

ODOT is actively recruiting from outside of Oregon. ODOT is outsourcing taxpayer jobs. These scabs do not know our transport system and are supporting ODOT’s continuous colonization of Oregon through roading and eminent domain. Same as 100 years ago. ODOT is hiring people from outside of Oregon to push through transport projects that Oregonians categorically reject. Same thing happened with the Oregon Trail.

For those of you who don’t understand freeway network planning: the cheapest easiest solution to reducing congestion at the Rose Quarter is to close some or all of the ramps. This will reduce freeway merging patterns, fender benders, and will reduce local traffic. There are 7 other interchanges between downtown Portland and downtown Vancouver. Removing one interchange will not impact local access as there are many other interchanges to divert to. This is the same solution taken on I-64 in St. Louis. This section of interstate has the same geography as Portland, large water body, dense urban area, large pro-sport stadium and a plethora of government buildings. Instead of widening this community opted to close 5 ramps nearby. Right of way or access management is a fundamental principle to transport planning, adding more ramps and lanes is at direct odds to responsible access management. The more connections you have onto a road network the slower the vehicles move across the network. This is basic geometry.

This enabled large scale urban redevelopment of the area and NO economic disadvantage to local businesses near ramp closure. Local traffic and business sales were better after the ramps closed. The I-64 freeway saw significant improvements in congestion relief after this solution was implemented. This solution worked in St. Louis and it will work in Oregon. On the other side of the Oregon Trail, we have a viable example solution that has already been proven to work, now we just need leaders who can see a new future without freeway expansions. Tolling is a completely inappropriate tool for future management of the freeway system.

Furthermore, ODOT is negligent in their assessments because they did not do an options analysis. ODOT has not changed any parameters of the Rose Quarter freeway project in the decade I have been tracking this project. Despite coming into opposition from all types of community members.

While I can appreciate the Speaker of the House Tina Kotek weighing in on the matters, ODOT has a way of conflating congestion issues, gaslighting, using outdated population statistics and outdated modeling techniques and data to make their arguments. Whatever charming story Dir. Mike Strickland is giving the Speaker of the House in private conversations, he has spent the last 6 years minimizing mine and local community activist's input. Every elected official in Portland came out against the freeway widening in November. I find it disappointing that Metro is spinning in the opposite direction.

Having the FHWA approved the EA analysis just days after the November election is just part of the conniving ways ODOT has pitted activists against each other. The Biden administration should have a chance to review the EA. Scuffling projects through the federal system without community buy in is what ODOT does and has been doing for an exceptionally long time. That is why they have ignored the "abandoned" highways. They have no intention of listening to and implementing community solutions. If it does not work (highway operations) then the locals will figure it out is the worst type of state government oversight.

ODOT has disbanded multiple community groups because they did not like their input. This is the real issue. Presenting "community buy in" after selectively stacking community advisory committees. I would like to remind the committee that trash is a serious problem in Portland. There is a member of the OTC in the garbage disposal business that is more concerned with building a freeway than keeping Portland clean. Additionally, adding religious leaders to a transport planning process is at odds with the separation of church and state. Previously church leaders opposed bike safety measures because they prefer Sunday parking lot access over community safety. #wwjd?

I would like to inform the Joint Transport Committee that ODOT has put out an RFP for a lobbyist in Washington DC, last month. I believe this is a conflict of interest for ODOT employees to be using taxpayer funding to lobby for projects that do not have community support. ODOT is also paying a lot of staff to provide briefings to elected officials that do not include the full story of opposition to freeway widening and tolling in general. Hiring a public relations firm to spin the story into another freeway project is colonization 2021.

I urgently request the Joint Transport Committee act against ODOT forming its own lobbying team with taxpayer money. They are using ODOT money to oppose the community intentions from people who are not even from Oregon. This is highly unethical. Furthermore, the title of the bill is about speed bumps not tolling. Another form of gaslighting.

Thanks for reading my view from a real Indigenous Oregonian looking for real reductions in GHG emissions.

OPPOSED to ODOT Freeway Colonization through tolling fees - 2021.

Roberta Robles