



Joint Committee on Transportation
February 9, 2021
HB 3055

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain and Members of the Committee,

We appreciate the continued work that the Oregon Legislature, the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) have undertaken to advance congestion management in the Portland metropolitan area. We are particularly grateful for the Legislature's leadership in 2017 in identifying transportation solutions that manage congestion in the Portland area as part of HB 2017. In the statewide listening sessions that led to HB 2017, the top concern expressed by constituents throughout Oregon was congestion in the greater Portland region, which greatly impacts the lives and livelihoods of people throughout the state. HB 2017 directed the OTC to implement value pricing on I-5 and I-205 in order to manage congestion, and over the past four years our governments have participated as key partners in this effort.

We are writing today to express our concern about the tolling provisions in HB 3055. We understand and support ODOT's need to identify a funding strategy for transportation improvements in the Portland region, but we believe the statute should better articulate the dual purpose of ODOT's tolling program to raise revenue *and* manage demand. While legislators and ODOT have asserted their commitment to comprehensive congestion management, we are concerned that the language in the bill does not accurately reflect that commitment. In particular, we have two major concerns:

1. **The substantial de-prioritization of congestion management:** The bill eliminates significant portions of the HB 2017 language referring to congestion management and congestion relief and replaces it with language referencing tolling. The primary objective of any pricing program must be to manage demand rather than to generate revenues. The Portland region has significant congestion on the transportation system, and if we do not manage this increasing traffic effectively and equitably, those needs will continue to spiral. When implemented to manage congestion, tolling has proven effective in other places in the United States and around the world at maximizing efficiency on existing roads and providing the greatest congestion relief and travel time savings.
2. **The significant changes to the use of funds to restrict them to freeway projects:** In order to successfully address congestion, the revenue raised from the users on each corridor (specifically I-5 and I-205) must also be available to manage potential diversion and provide other affordable transportation options. Tolling I-5 and I-205 has the potential to significantly change the traffic patterns throughout these broad multimodal corridors, and ODOT and its partners must have a holistic approach to managing traffic on the main highway and local roads. Multimodal approaches, especially transit capital improvements, must work hand-in-hand with any congestion pricing system. We are concerned that the language in the bill prioritizes freeway projects and limits the ability to use toll revenue to support the multimodal approaches necessary to effectively manage congestion.

In summary, we have two requests. First, ensure that statutory language reflects the dual purpose of ODOT's tolling program in the Portland area: to manage traffic congestion and raise revenue. Second, align the language

with OTC's commitment to the Portland Metro Area Value Pricing Policy Advisory Committee to take a corridor approach to tolling by making revenues available to manage and provide resources for all the transportation needs in that corridor.

Implementing the first comprehensive congestion management system in our state is a monumental challenge. We appreciate the Legislature's, the OTC's and ODOT's continued careful consideration and execution of the necessary next steps to implement this program. We look forward to working with you to provide our region with better tools to help people get around safely, affordably, and efficiently.