



Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Julie Fitzgerald on HB 3065-8:

If Metro-Area Highway Tolling Is Implemented, then Legislation Should Establish Key Principles for Use of Revenues and Increase Public Transit

Scheduled for public hearing on May 11, 2021, before the Joint Committee On Transportation

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Noble, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the City of Wilsonville, I am testifying regarding HB 3065-8.

The City agrees with legislative leadership that Oregon's transportation system is woefully underfunded. The revenue increases provided by the legislature's bold 2017 transportation package (HB 2017) have proven to be insufficient at funding key projects on highway corridors of regional, state and national significance such as the I-205/Abernathy Bridge improvement project.

The City appreciates that HB 3065-8 explicitly names the Interstate 5 Boone Bridge and Seismic Improvement Project as a priority facility for the Oregon Department of Transportation to advance.

While the City applauds the legislature's foresight to seek a mechanism for creating a regional/state funding match to a pending federal transportation infrastructure program of considerable significance, serious concerns remain by many segments of the public. Members of the City Council and our constituents seek answers and to resolve issues around the impacts of tolling on our communities on the proposed legislation.

If tolling of the freeways is implemented, then new highway facilities, improved corridor arterials and increased public transit/alternative transportation options must be realized. We agree with the many of the Portland metro-area local elected leaders that if tolling is to be implemented, it must be done in a thoughtful, systemic manner that provides equitable transportation options for all segments of society and results in less traffic congestion:

- **Revenue generated by tolling should be used for new facilities that improve that highway corridor's traffic-flow and sustainability.** Many Oregonians believe that the current highway system has been paid for already. Therefore, it is crucial that if tolling is implemented, then revenues must be used to pay for new highway facilities that replace and improve the traffic-handling capacity and seismic-resilience of outdated facilities on that highway.
- **Impacts of increased highway diversion onto local arterials must be adequately mitigated:** ODOT forecasts that tolling will add to the increasing number of vehicles diverted away from the region's freeway system and onto local roads. The legislature should create a process for ODOT and the Oregon Transportation Commission to designate in conjunction with local jurisdictions specific highway-corridor arterials impacted by diversion traffic, and a program that funds mitigation measures for road improvements and maintenance of those impacted arterials.

We appreciate legislative leadership's specific named inclusion of the Interstate 5 Boone Bridge and Seismic Improvement Project in Section 18 of the -8 amendment that provides for tolling

revenues to fund highway diversion mitigations in subsection (4) that “(a) Reduce traffic congestion not only on the tollway but also on adjacent, connected or parallel highways to the tollways, regardless of ownership; and (b) Improve safety not only on the tollway but also on adjacent, connected or parallel highways to the tollways, regardless of ownership;” and subsection (5) to “(b) Determine appropriate investments or efforts that may minimize or reduce any potential impacts”.

The City respectfully suggests that this same approach as outlined in Section 18 to address tolled highway traffic diversion impacts mitigation be applied *to all and only tolled highway corridors* where diversion is impacting local arterial facilities. Providing similar benefit to the tolled highway corridors’ arterials can help generate support from local jurisdictions impacted by traffic diversion.

- **Approaches to tolling should be system-wide:** The City agrees with metropolitan mayors that if tolling is implemented, then a system-wide approach should apply to both the Metro-area I-5 and I-205 corridors simultaneously to ensure a more efficient and equitable regional system.
- **Multimodal transportation alternatives and public transit must be expanded and coordinated:** Tolling will significantly increase the cost of travel in private vehicles in the Metro region, and therefore will have a greater cost-impact to lower-income communities. Therefore, bus and light-rail transit services and bike and pedestrian infrastructure be expanded and coordinated in order to provide viable transportation alternatives, including advancing highway bus-on-shoulder options. Particularly in the southern half of the Metro area, transit service is inadequate for many work and school commutes.

Since the Oregon Constitution limits funds raised by fuel taxes and user fees to be spent solely on roads and related bike/ped facilities, the legislature will need to provide alternative sources of funding, such as the State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) program, to ensure that transit service can be expanded and coordinated to meet growing demand, particularly for both the suburban and urban-rural interface areas. Additionally, public subsidies to lower-income populations to support work/school commuting should be considered as an option for communities impacted by tolled highways.

The City of Wilsonville greatly values our partnership with the leadership of the Oregon Legislative Assembly and ODOT to advance strategic programs that advance Oregon’s transportation system for all segments of society and our economy. We recognize that Oregon faces some big-ticket costs ahead to replace key highway facilities, including \$500 million for the I-205/Abernathy Bridge capacity- and seismic-improvement project, \$500 million for the I-5 Boone Bridge and seismic improvement project, over \$750 million I-5/I-84 Rose Quarter improvement project, and the +\$1 billion Interstate Bridge replacement project. It is unrealistic to expect that the “feds” will bail us out on all of these projects, and therefore we need to look for ways to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and use funds generated by the region and state to leverage even greater amounts of federal funds to improve our transportation system. Thank you consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,



Julie Fitzgerald, Mayor
City of Wilsonville