

**Oregon State Legislature
Joint Committee On Transportation
May 11, 2021 Meeting**

Testimony

Dear Legislative Leaders,

I'm writing in opposition to HB 3065, because this Legislature is failing to make the connection between the climate emergency, and our state's transportation system. In a time when we need safe, completed, connected pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks, our legislative leaders are instead choosing to pour money into our carbon-spewing freeway system. In a time when our friends and relatives are being slaughtered on our roads because those facilities are unsafe at any speed, our legislative leaders are choosing to double down on investments for automobiles, while ignoring the need to create safe places for people to be humans in public in community. We need plazas, sidewalks, protected bicycle lanes, electric intercity rail, electric buses, and massive tree planting to reduce the urban heat island effect so people are safe exercising outside on hot summer days.

I categorically reject that there is any sane or rational reason to move forward with spending billions of dollars on freeway expansions in the region in 2021, and any legislator supporting this bill needs to reckon with the legacy of a warmer planet, unsafe streets, air pollution, and lack of accessible public transportation they are leaving for future generations by supporting this bill.

We need faster commutes, not freeway congestion. There isn't a single freeway expansion anywhere in North America that has solved traffic congestion by adding additional lanes. Thanks to the well-understood concept of induced demand, we now know that all three of these freeway widening projects will not get trucks or commuters out of a traffic jam, it'll merely make them miserable during years of road construction only to have the roads fill up with traffic the day that new lanes are opened.

The group No More Freeways (NMF) has repeatedly caught ODOT blatantly lying about the traffic projections included in the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion; in fact, ODOT lied so blatantly in the traffic projections that NMF sued them over it.

No one voting for this bill should be under the impression this will provide any long term solution to traffic congestion.

The only way to reduce traffic congestion is to implement congestion pricing; unfortunately, ODOT is not pursuing congestion pricing (which works to minimize traffic jams) and instead is only pursuing tolling (which works to maximize revenue raised, a mechanism they need to raise the money for these massively oversized expansion projects).

This bill is a blank check for fossil fuel infrastructure: 40% of Oregon's carbon emissions come from transportation. Even under the rosiest of predictions for vehicle electrification, Oregonians simply must reduce the number of miles they drive as the state grows if we want to have a shot of hitting our emission reduction targets. We need to use the roads we already have better, not add more; and we instead need to be investing in public transportation, walkable communities, high speed rail, intercity buses, and maintaining existing roads.

Have you been paying attention to ODOT lately?

It's been a rough month for the Oregon Department of Transportation. Between the outcry on the traffic fatalities on 82nd Avenue, the horrific images of clearcutting wildfire lands in the Cascades, and their continued tomfoolery with the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion, why do a bunch of legislators trust this agency with billions of dollars of freeway projects that aren't anywhere close to shovel-ready? There's undeniably massive cost overruns, slights-of-hands, overpromising and under-delivering ahead for ODOT on these mega projects. The agency is fundamentally incapable of transparency, accountability, or pushing policy that meets any conservation, equity, or mobility goals other than handing out massive construction contracts to asphalt, automobile, oil, and freight lobbyists. ODOT has so many other priorities in need of desperate funding – why should we give them a slush fund for more freeways?

The Rose Quarter project is imperiled, why is Speaker Kotek dumping more money into it? This proposed expansion has been a total dumpster fire. The continued cost escalations, the public records showing ODOT was lying about the width of the freeway, the hidden plans to move the freeway even closer to Harriet Tubman Middle School, the community leaders who walked away from the project in protest of ODOT's abysmal community outreach last summer... it goes on and on. The Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion is an absolute disaster currently facing two lawsuits and continued skepticism from a litany of youth climate activists, transportation and racial justice advocates, and public health leaders pushing for a full Environmental Impact Statement. Given the headlines over the past couple years, why on earth would any legislator want to write ODOT a blank check to continue squandering money on this project?

I'm perfectly comfortable, as a member of a three-car household, with not making any more capital investments in our freeway or highway system until we've built out the bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and urban greening that needs to happen to enable a justice transition to a post-carbon future for Oregon. The freeway and highway system is complete, and it basically works. It needs to be maintained, but it doesn't need to be expanded; if there is congestion, it needs to be managed with pricing for now, until we get through this critical period of time for the climate to a future of 100% emission-free vehicles.

I need my legislative leaders to get to this same realization, and show some climate leadership. Stop funding freeway expansions. Start funding places and infrastructure for people. I want to see the Oregon Legislature fund sidewalks, crosswalks, high speed rail, bike lanes, frequent bus service, electrified buses, charging stations for automobiles, intercity bus service, and basic road maintenance ahead of committing future generations to paying for these ghastly freeway expansions that are nothing short of climate arson.

Signed,



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