

I support tolling our highways in order to manage congestion and fund lower-carbon modes of transportation. However, the -8 amendments instead use toll revenue to increase the size of our state's highways in order to increase driving and increase our contribution to climate change. This is astoundingly irresponsible, and I expected better of Speaker Kotek.

It's also unwise to dedicate more funding to the Rose Quarter freeway expansion, when it's almost universally opposed by the city it runs through and isn't one of the more dangerous roads that ODOT is responsible for.

Instead, new tolling revenue needs to be dedicated to reducing the number of vehicle-miles it takes to move people and freight around our state. Make the system more efficient instead of just bigger. Improve mass-transit systems to pull people out of their cars at the same time that higher tolls add their own disincentive for driving alone. Improve pedestrian safety so that people aren't scared into driving. ODOT doesn't like to do this, which is why the legislature shouldn't give them a blank check.

I do appreciate the apparent commitment to use "equitable income-based toll rates" rather than flat tolls, in order to make sure the wealthy pay our fair share of road costs.

It is also frustrating to see a bill whose summary is "study development of uniform standards for speed bump height" to be completely rewritten by amendments into a bill to give ODOT a blank slate to increase greenhouse gas emissions. I don't care that this is how you make the legislature actually work in the face of unreasonable deadlines: you should have fixed those deadlines by now.