

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

My name is Paul Runge, and I'm a 29-year old Portland resident. I live a few blocks from two ODOT highways: Powell Avenue and 82nd Avenue.

I oppose HB 3065 as written. Please modify the bill to dedicate congestion-pricing or toll revenue to transit, bike, and pedestrian projects as well as maintenance of ODOT's existing (often neglected) facilities.

Congestion pricing and tolling is a good idea, particularly if there's some sort of equity adjustment so that low-income communities are not disproportionately burdened by such charges. I fully support implementing congestion pricing with an equity adjustment as soon as possible. However, taking the revenue raised from congestion pricing and dedicating it to ODOT without instruction on how to use it is a recipe for bad outcomes. The open intent of making such a dedication is to enable ODOT to rapidly build more freeway capacity. Said another way, in the same legislation that we're taxing driving with a congestion fee, we're subsidizing driving by building more freeways. That's like taxing cigarettes to discourage smoking, but then using the revenue to flood the market with cheap cigarettes. It doesn't make sense as a solution to congestion or carbon emissions - two very real problems that Oregonians want solved.

The solution that does make sense is to dedicate most of congestion-pricing revenue to expanding transit, biking, and walking infrastructure--low-carbon transportation alternatives that boast greater space efficiency and throughput than freeway lanes. These are the transportation modes we see in the world's great cities and regions--the places Americans travel to seeking adventure and respite. Oregon should follow those cities' examples. Funding transportation alternatives while levying a fee on driving would incentivize Oregonians to stay off the road when congestion is bad and provide good alternatives for how Oregonians can get around. This solution improves congestion. It funds transit, biking, and walking. It speeds up traffic for commuters. It increases freight mobility. And it reduces carbon emissions in the age of climate change.

A considerable secondary portion of congestion-pricing revenue should go to maintaining ODOT's existing neglected infrastructure, like 82nd Avenue and its other orphan highways that require billions in reinvestment to become safe and multimodal. If ODOT was instructed via this legislation to set aside money for such maintenance, the City of Portland and ODOT wouldn't have to haggle over who pays what percentage in a jurisdictional transfer of 82nd Avenue. If ODOT was instructed to set aside money for such maintenance, they would simply take care of their old facilities, saving lives via safety improvements and improving overall corridor function.

Again, please change HB3065 to dedicate congestion pricing revenue to transit, biking, and walking and maintenance of ODOT's existing facilities.

Thank you for your service and for considering my perspective.
Paul Runge
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