

Members of the JTSSTP,

My name is Paul Runge. I'm a Portland resident. I drive, walk, bike, and take the bus to get around, and I work professionally as an urban planner. In general, I feel like I have a good sense of different perspectives folks have regarding our transportation system.

It's difficult as an urban planner to call out the actions of local people in my field, my own colleagues really. But ODOT's behavior and decisions are such that I can't sit on the sidelines.

While I support capping I-5 in the Rose Quarter to reconnect the local street grid and create developable land, **I strongly oppose expanding the freeway to include auxiliary lanes.** The expansion portion of the project is fundamentally rooted in a 20th century car-first mentality that--I cannot emphasize this enough--is no longer considered best practice in contemporary urban planning. Maybe those were the best practices 20 years ago when the Director of the Urban Mobility Office went to Portland State for his planning degree. But nowadays, those sorts of ideas face strong opposition in classrooms and in professional circles. You see this in ODOT's own consultants, who have indicated that congestion pricing and safety shoulders are good alternatives to expansion. And I hear it from fellow planners all the time when ODOT comes up: it's professionally hard to speak out, but ODOT is woefully behind the curve.

Here are some of the understandings that inform contemporary planning best practice as it relates to freeway expansion. Contemporary practice recognizes the inherent equity and the financial and environmental destructiveness of car dependency. Contemporary practice recognizes the errors of highway projects that displaced so many families, particularly families of color, and refuses to double down on those errors by widening the scars. Contemporary practice recognizes our opportunity to promote sustainability and clean air through better transportation investments, while not sacrificing regional economic development or job opportunities for people of color. And contemporary practice recognizes the folly of freeway expansion in light of the induced demand phenomenon and the ready, effective alternative found in congestion pricing. Expanding the Rose Quarter before implementing congestion pricing and building sustainable transportation alternatives discards what planners have learned in recent decades. It further entrenches a status quo that everyone knows isn't working.

This subcommittee has the opportunity to help usher in an era of change at ODOT and bring its investments into alignment with contemporary planning best practice. **As a first step, you should support a full Environmental Impact Statement for the project, ideally one that explores the many alternatives to expansion**--alternatives that reduce traffic congestion and support a more equitable and sustainable transportation system. As a second step, I hope to see many of you championing such alternatives in the legislature in the years to come.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for your service to Oregon.

Paul Runge  
Portland, 97206