

To Co-Chairs Senator Frederick, Representative Nathanson and members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment today. My name is Joe Stenger. I am a family doctor, a grandfather, a daily cyclist, a resident of NE Portland and Co-Chair of the Transportation Committee of MCAT, Mobilizing Climate Action Together. I have attached below the position paper of our committee on this topic.

We are discussing investments in our future. Looking ahead a couple of generations, we know that my granddaughters will live with more uncontrolled illnesses and pests, more killing heat, more extreme torrential rains and droughts, more scarcity of healthy food and with fewer types of animals and plants. The decisions we make now will affect how dire that future will be.

Transportation contributes more than any other sector in OR to climate disruption, and most of that is from cars and trucks. We need to shift focus from getting vehicles to their destinations as fast as possible, to focus on safety from crashes and safety from pollution. Congestion pricing is the best tool to reduce tailpipe emissions, certainly not widening highways. With properly designed tolling, we will encourage drivers to shift travel times to less congested times, to reduce the number of trips and to shift to other modes such as carpooling, transit or walking and rolling. We must have graduated exemptions to tolls based on factors such as household income or disability, as we certainly don't want to worsen social inequities.

We should start pricing highway travel through the Rose Quarter and other congested sections before we pour billions into highway widening, since we know that widening will result in more traffic and more congestion. We need to invest much more in transit, including making it free at least for selected groups. If our statutes about money going into the Highway Fund are an impediment to our building a transportation system that promotes health, we need to change those statutes. We cannot be constrained by the outdated dictates of the 20th century if we are to effectively address the challenges of this century.

I want my grandchildren to look back at the choices we made now and be thankful that we passed on to them a safer and healthier Oregon.

Thank you.

Joseph Stenger MD



What MCAT would support in a tolling program

MCAT recognizes that tolling is only one part of a complex system of transportation funding. With a specific focus on tolling, these are principles that will contribute to an improved and cleaner transportation system.

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3. **Tolling must reduce vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT).**
4. Meeting or exceeding our state climate goals must be a primary goal of tolling.
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8. **Congestion pricing is the most effective form of tolling to accomplish**
9. **these goals.** For example, driving behavior patterns would be improved by a larger
10. toll at the highest volume times and a smaller toll or no toll during low volume times. This encourages shifting time of travel for those who can, and shifting mode of travel to carpooling, transit or active transportation for others.
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14. **Improving revenue and reducing congestion are important goals of tolling.**
15. While tolling will help finance large projects (such as the I-5 Bridge Replacement across the Columbia River) and will alleviate fiscal deficits of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), there must be an equal focus on the twin goals of improving
16. climate and increasing equity. Thus, the tolling income should support frequent Vancouver to Portland bus service and the extended light-rail line across the bridge. We applaud ODOT's stated intention to focus on these climate and equity goals and we look
17. forward to their effective implementation.
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21. A cost abatement, i.e. low-income discount, program must be a central

22. feature of the tolling program to avoid it acting as a regressive tax. This should

23. include consideration of need and income such as for low-income people with disabilities or those with specific work requirements that necessitate using a vehicle, and should provide upfront cost offsets rather than later reimbursements.

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27. A tolling program must be designed as an integral part of a robust system

28. of public transit and active transportation across our region. This is how we

29. will help to meet our climate goals, alleviate highway congestion, reduce commuting time, improve equity and improve health of communities adjacent to highways. This should include incentives for businesses to place jobs near housing to reduce commuting distances

30. and to promote carpooling, as well as efforts to increase safety and attractiveness of public transit so as to augment ridership.

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34. A tolling program must be designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

35. Verifiable and publicly available metrics must be established prior to the beginning of the program and then reported regularly.

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39. Tolls should be instituted simultaneously across both I-5 and I-205 Columbia

40. River bridges. This will avoid any massive shifts of traffic from tolled to

41. untolled roads with resultant worsening travel times and increased pollution.

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10. Implementation of tolling across the I-5 and I-205 Columbia River bridges

11. should begin soon. This is so that accurate traffic volumes over the I-5 bridge

12. will determine appropriate size of the I-5 bridge replacement, rather than overbuilding with resultant induced demand of traffic flow and worsening of GHG emissions.

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11. **It is necessary to revise the State Highway Fund (ORS 366.505).**
12. This will allow more flexible use of tolling and other road user fees to support multimodal transportation.
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References

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