

Dear Special Committee Members,

I am Paul Rippey, a resident of the St. Johns Neighborhood in North Portland.

Like many people in St. Johns, I am dumbfounded by the State's policies on transportation as manifested by ODOT.

ODOT does not promote the multimodal transportation that we want. Instead, it is all about freeways. Citizens here say that "everything ODOT touches turns to concrete", and that is not far from the truth. However, pouring more concrete is a losing strategy. ODOT refuses to confront the demand that they plan to induce with their megaprojects. In particular, the Rose Quarter widening of I-5 is a disaster: the budgeting has been irresponsible, since it has doubled in cost without any work being done - people get fired for misleading accounting in the private sector. It will not improve traffic - ODOT's own figures show traffic returning to the same level of congestion right after the project is completed. It is driven by public relations (I get lots of expensive glossy flyers in the mail) rather than data (ODOT still refuses to conduct a credible environmental impact study). And it is mislabeled: all the mega projects include bringing high speed traffic into parts of Portland that have been spared that curse so far.

Lately, the logic of highways has been turned upside down again, as ODOT is supporting tolling, NOT to reduce traffic demand, but to raise more money for concrete. I DO support tolling, but only if the revenue raised is spent on multimodal transportation, not on ODOT's megaprojects. Use the money on better public transport, on riverine transport (Portland is the largest American city with a navigable river that has NO way of transporting people on the river), and use it on deasphaltisation: tear up some roads and make places for kids to play and people to sit on a bench and talk to their neighbors. Be bold: design your new projects for 2050, not for 1950. The era of the automobile will end when the present generation of young people takes over, and us old folks are all gone. Today's young people will NOT want concrete ribbons in their neighborhoods. That's our generation's dream from the Eisenhower years.

Sorry for the rant. This is important, and I'm frustrated by ODOT's public relations campaigns, dishonesty, and retrograde thinking.

Best regards,
Paul Rippey