

Gentlepeople, Chairs, Members:

It is apparent that there are underlying issues beyond this particular potential action that go to the lack of trust in ODOT. Given ODOT's leadership focus on motor vehicle transportation and building lane miles and their history of misrepresentation of data, it is crucial that you question their data and assumptions and call them to account, not only on this project, but also on the Rose Quarter and Interstate Bridge replacement and other projects.

While I'm not opposed to congestion pricing, it must only be implemented with clear guardrails to assure that it achieves the stated goals and with monitoring to demonstrate that it is, indeed, working. There must be clearly articulated plans to adjust it if it proves not to meet the objectives of to have unintended negative consequences.

Consideration of tolling proposals must be grounded in clear goals. Is the primary objective to relieve congestion or is it to enhance revenue? Or to contribute to the goal of net-zero green house gas emissions by 2050?

I urge you to establish clearly that the primary goals are reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and (related) congestion, rather than generating revenue. While these may be conflated with revenue generation, it is vital that the revenue be invested in infrastructure that further serves the goals of reducing congestion in the service of moving toward net-zero. We must not do anything that would encourage more vehicle miles driven, particularly with single occupancy. (My fear is that ODOT's leadership will give lip service to congestion and climate goals while reveling in the added revenue that could be used for more highway construction.)

There must be effective and easily used means to avoid impacting Oregonians with low income, who often have jobs that require transportation to the job site, frequently at locations not well served by public transit.

Building new lanes has nearly always (or always?) resulted not in reducing congestion, but in increased traffic and even more congestion. It is at best a short-term solution, not worth the disruption of the construction.

A major concern with tolling the interstate highways or other state highways is the diversion of traffic to local streets. In the case of I-205 through Portland,

it seems clear to me that there would be significant diversion to 82nd Avenue, 122nd Avenue, and other streets that already are high accident corridors and already not safe for active transportation (e.g., biking or walking). No doubt other areas adjacent to I-205 would also experience diversion of traffic.

82nd Avenue is already a high accident street with significant issues of pedestrian and bicycle safety. Additional traffic would have a serious negative impact on safety, congestion, vehicular/road rage violence, and on the emerging plans to make it a safer and more transit-friendly street. It is already a mess of potholes and more traffic would make that worse, further stretching the extremely stressed Portland PBOT budget for street maintenance.

Any tolling proposal must have credible and specific plans to manage diversion, along with transparent monitoring, reporting, and contingency plans. Revenue sharing with the agencies that are responsible for the streets that get any diverted traffic must be included in the plans if they go forward.

A plan to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions must include alternative infrastructure. That should include investment in public transit that works (that people will actually use and that feels safe) and in safe active transportation options. If a trip by transit takes several times as long as driving, even with tolling, I expect the option most will choose is to pay the toll, not to choose an alternative means of getting to their destination.

I urge you to demand clarity from ODOT about how any proposed tolling will meet the goals of reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. And to assure that revenues from congestion pricing be invested in climate-smart infrastructure, rather than in additional lane-miles.

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