



December 2nd, 2023

RE: Tolling Hearing, December 2nd, 2023, Portland Community College SE

Committee Co-Chairs Nathanson and Frederick and Members of the Committee,

My name is Zachary Lauritzen and I am the director of Oregon Walks, a pedestrian advocacy organization who believes that everyone has the right to safe and accessible movement on foot. I also serve as the 82nd Avenue Coalition Manager. This Coalition is made up of people who live, work, play, worship, and go to school along the corridor. We came about in response to the jurisdictional transfer of 82nd Ave from ODOT to PBOT.

As the 82nd Avenue Coalition manager, the primary thing I hear from folks along the corridor is they want it to be less like a highway and more like a main street: much slower speeds, excellent transit, trees, crossings, lighting, etc. And, we are making progress toward those goals.

However, with tolling, we are concerned that it could dramatically increase the number of vehicles 82nd will carry due to diversion. Further, these would be vehicles that are not intending to contribute to the local economy, rather they would be trying to travel long distances, quickly, and to avoid tolls. This is a particularly real concern in Clackamas and east Portland in general because there are so many straight, wide arterials that will invite folks to divert off I205 and speed through communities. ***And it is important to note that these are the same high crash corridors where the vast majority of serious injuries and deaths occur.***

Now, I share all that not because Oregon Walks is against congestion pricing. We are not! In fact, congestion pricing can be a great tool to manage demand. However, this only works—and is only equitable and just—if people have alternatives (walking, biking, transit) so they can replace their vehicle trip with another mode. ***We urge you to challenge the assumption that tolling revenue has the same constitutional limits as those put on the gas tax***, and use this opportunity to invest in alternatives, not just more lanes.

I don't think I have to remind anyone here but it's worth saying: we cannot build our way out of congestion. Every major metropolitan area in the United States has tried to do it—LA, Houston, Atlanta, Chicago, etc—and this approach has failed. If congestion pricing is to be effective, we

must spend the revenue on building out alternatives and in sharing revenue with local jurisdictions for improved safety and access projects. At the same time, ***we must also plan*** and invest in development patterns—jobs, schools, shopping, etc—so folks don't have to drive for all their daily needs.

Our friends in east Portland and Clackamas, and my community along 82nd Avenue, have every right to be frustrated with tolling if the dollars aren't spent on giving us robust options. We have every right to be frustrated if we are not using this as an opportunity to invest in different ways of moving around our communities. For too long, we have experienced disproportionate injuries and deaths on our streets, disproportionate noise from roadways, and disproportionate levels of air pollution. I urge you and your colleagues to direct ODOT to commit tolling revenue into alternatives and into local jurisdictions to mitigate the impacts of diversion, and not into wider roads that will, I assure you, fill up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Z. Lauritzen", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Zachary Lauritzen
Oregon Walks