

To the Joint Committee on Transportation, Special Subcommittee on Transportation Planning,

My name is Dr. Christopher Hale. I am a board-certified emergency medicine physician, who grew up in the Portland Metro area, graduated from OHSU, and have been in clinical practice for over a decade. I am also the father of two young children.

As an ER physician, I have witnessed first-hand the devastation of a transportation system that prioritizes vehicle speed over safety and health.

I have seen the legacy of the historic injustices of highways built through the neighborhoods of communities of color and the poor, in the form of chronic respiratory illnesses and other chronic disease.

I have witnessed the impact of the ongoing climate crisis, as people flood our ERs, unable to breathe due to wildfire smoke, and suffering from heat stroke during the increasingly common summer heat waves.

I have cared for too many patients whose entire lives are permanently altered by losing a limb or becoming paralyzed due to vehicle violence.

I've shed tears with the families who have lost family members, a parent or sibling or even a child, taken in a moment by a transportation system designed to allow increasingly larger vehicles to drive at increasingly faster speeds, and considers the safety of anyone outside of those vehicles as a lesser priority.

Let me be clear. The work I do in the ER, up to and including saving the life of an individual, is merely a *Band-Aid*. *But you have the cure*. As legislators, you have the power to design a transportation system that protects the Oregonians who are currently dying in our streets, and will put us on the path towards a stable climate. *I ask that you be brave enough to embrace that responsibility, and use your power to cure these ills.*

Unfortunately, Oregon is currently heading in the exact wrong direction. As it stands, ODOT's \$1.9 billion plans for the Rose Quarter Freeway Expansion will only further devastate the health of communities living nearby, lead to more traffic deaths, and lock in decades of devastating increased carbon emissions.

Induced demand is very real, and NEVER leads to sustained decreased congestion. Induced demand means that every additional lane built will only increase vehicle miles traveled, and thereby increase carbon admissions. ODOT's current plans call for building a freeway *three times wider* than what currently exists, which would be wide enough for an incredible 10 lane highway! This would be an astonishing blight on our downtown core, during a time when the decline of downtowns across the country calls for building more walkable, bikeable, greener, more inviting downtown cores, which will attract both new residents, and shoppers from the surrounding metro area. Nobody wants to spend time dining, shopping, and hanging out with friends and family *near a 10-lane highway.*

The true width and scope of the proposed Rose Quarter Highway Expansion has been hidden from the public, and only revealed through public records requests submitted by heroic everyday citizens. The freeway proposed is much larger than anything that has been studied for traffic projections or air pollution. **It is absolutely imperative that you demand an Environmental Impact**

Study (EIS) on the proposed Rose Quarter Freeway expansion. That EIS also needs to study alternatives to freeway expansion.

The Oregon legislature's transportation plans need to have the explicit goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled. To make that a reality, **the incredibly large amounts of money being ear-marked for highway projects needs to be redirected into alternative transportation options**, including better and more frequent public transportation, and a system of safe protected bike lanes that allow people to consider active transportation options without feeling that they're risking their lives every time they're outside of a vehicle.

Tolling can be a very effective tool to reduce congestion, especially congestion pricing. However, **it is absolutely imperative that tolling revenue can NOT be used to expand highways**, which only encourages more people to drive. **Totaling revenue must be allocated to public transit and active transportation options.**

It is important that these alternatives to driving are built up as soon as possible. People will never consider taking any transportation options other than a private vehicle if all other options are poorly funded, poorly designed, highly inconvenient, and lead to incredibly long transportation times compared to private vehicles.

The decisions you make now will determine the world our children and grandchildren live in. Will this be a future where Oregonians, including children, continue to die in the streets under larger and faster vehicles, where our communities choke on increasing air pollution and suffer from worsening climate disasters and a collapsing ecosystem? Or will they live in the future where they have the option of using safe public transit and active transportation options, to travel to revitalized and walkable downtown cores, and enjoy a future with a healthy environment, breathable air, and a stable climate?

You may be facing pressures to maintain the long-time status quo, of building wider and wider highways, even when the status quo has been failing us for generations. You might consider the status quo the "middle ground" or the "politically safe" thing to do. But in a crisis, choosing anything but the most ambitious and far-reaching plans is the unsafe choice. I ask you to look to the future, and *make the brave decisions now*, for the sake our future generations.

Dr. Christopher Hale