



December 14, 2023

Joint Committee on Transportation  
Special Committee on Transportation Planning  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

*Written public comment sent via: [JTSSTP.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:JTSSTP.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)*

Dear Committee Co-Chairs Nathanson & Frederick, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for taking the time to travel to meet with our communities and providing the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the tolling projects proposed for our region.

At the outset, I should share that the City of Lake Oswego is in support of consideration of a statewide funding strategy for roads and bridges that includes road user fees. However, we are opposed to this current proposal.

Oregon should move towards road user fees state wide. Universal road user fees can help us make better use of our existing roads and reduce the impact of transportation on the climate. Road user fees can also be designed to deal with the urban-rural divide in a way that the gas tax does not. We all need to recognize that as our fleet becomes more efficient, and as some drivers switch to alternative fuels, the gas tax simply cannot pay for the projects we need for 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation.

With this said, the City is opposed to this current proposal because it imposes unreasonable costs on our residents and our local government. In fact, what this proposal will do is shift an existing problem from the State's highways onto our local roadways without providing funds to mitigate the impact on our roads. We have offered many of these comments over the past few years, and the comments are based on the data that has been generated by ODOT as part of their environmental analysis. To date, we believe that the State has failed to adequately respond to these issues.

Since discussion of this topic can easily become overwhelming, I wanted to provide the subcommittee some information regarding specific issues identified with the invitation to speak at the hearing.

### Impact on Local Residents with Limited Alternative Routes

Lake Oswego is located south of Portland between Interstate 5 to the west and the Willamette River to the east. Residents wishing to travel to and from the east to destinations such as Portland International Airport or the Sunnyside campus for Kaiser Permanente would need to cross the Willamette River and would have the following options:

1. The Abernethy Bridge on Interstate 205, which is proposed for tolling starting in 2026 to recover costs from widening and improving seismic resiliency;
2. The Arch Bridge on Oregon Highway 43, which is a two-lane, narrow bridge and is often congested with traffic entering the downtown area of Oregon City;
3. The Sellwood Bridge in southeast Portland, which is a bottleneck between Oregon Highway 43 and the vibrant community of Sellwood and is often backed up; or
4. The Marquam Bridge on Interstate 5, which is being proposed for tolling with the Regional Mobility Pricing Project.

While the Arch Bridge and Sellwood Bridge are non-tolled options, these routes are often currently congested due to the neighborhoods and communities they travel through, as well as existing diversion from the interstate system. Tolling Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 would be expected to increase reliance on these non-tolled routes and introduce additional diverted traffic looking to avoid the tolled facilities. These locally owned routes lack funding to fix the current congestion issues, as well as have a significant number of conflicting intersections and many vulnerable users. This makes them less than ideal for through travel.

### Public transportation

Transit in Lake Oswego is managed by TriMet, who is currently rolling out service revisions due to impacts from the recent pandemic. Currently, the residents of Lake Oswego have limited transit options to reach destinations within the City, as well as within the greater region.

1. Lake Oswego's most regular transit line (Line 35) serves stops along Oregon Highway 43 along the eastern border of the City. The bus line is not currently frequent service, but has been recently upgraded through TriMet's Forward Together. However, the same revisions also removed any transit access south of Oswego Lake, which has created a significant transit desert in the City.
2. Bus Line 37 is the only bus line currently serving Boones Ferry Road, which a major commercial corridor on the west side of the City that has two affordable housing projects being constructed. This line only provides hourly service and operates weekdays during the morning and evening peak periods (for a total of six hours).

3. Bus Line 38 also only provides hourly service on weekdays during the morning and evening peak periods. This bus line provides some access to the northern area of Lake Oswego and along Kruse Way, which is a major roadway that borders between a major employment area and a residential neighborhood.
4. Bus Line 78 currently serves Kerr Parkway and Country Club Road in its route between the Lake Oswego Transit Center and Beaverton Transit Center. The bus does operate weekdays and weekends, but only serves the northern area of the City.

Public transportation is currently not a reliable option for many of the residents within Lake Oswego and would be expected to be less attractive as transit corridors become more congested. Boones Ferry Road, which is a recently improved commercial corridor and is planned for multiple affordable housing projects, is only served by transit for six hours on weekdays and only when congestion is at its worst. Kruse Way, which extends from Oregon Highway 217 and provides transit access to a significant amount of employment and residences, is also only served during the peak periods on weekdays. Both of these routes would be expected to receive significantly more traffic with drivers diverting from the interstate to avoid tolls.

### Proximity to Retirement Communities

Lake Oswego is home to a significant population of people 65 years of age and older and has been identified as having the second highest aging population in the State of Oregon. The City is home to a large number of retirement communities, including:

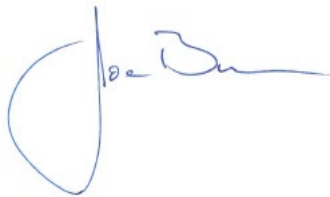
1. Mary's Woods, which is located on Oregon Highway 43, adjacent to Marylhurst Commons (an affordable housing project currently under construction);
2. Stafford Retirement Community, which is located on Stafford Road on the southern edge of the City;
3. Oswego Place by Bonaventure, which is located near the recently reconstructed Boones Ferry Road;
4. Greenridge Estates Assisted Living, which is located near Boones Ferry Road on the north edge of the City; and
5. The Springs at Lake Oswego, recently constructed near the intersection of Kruse Way at Boones Ferry Road;
6. The Springs at Carman Oaks, located north of the Springs at Lake Oswego just outside the Kruse Way corridor; and
7. The Pearl at Kruse Way, located west of the Springs at Lake Oswego and north of the Kruse Way corridor.

As you can likely see from the above information, the residents of Lake Oswego have limited route choices for avoiding the tolling proposed on Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 by the Oregon Department of Transportation. Transit would not be considered a viable choice for the majority of the community and would be expected to be less attractive as tolling is

implemented, as access may be limited to either the northern and eastern edges of the City or does not provide frequent enough service to be usable. Also, with the aging population of the City and its multiple retirement communities, tolling may place a greater burden on seniors and the services that they require.

I appreciate your consideration of the City of Lake Oswego submitted testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Buck", with a large, stylized initial "J" on the left.

Mayor Joe Buck

Attached: Clackamas County Agencies Joint Values on the Proposed Regional Congestion Pricing and Toll Projects within the Portland Metro Region; December 5, 2023

# Joint Values on the Proposed Regional Congestion Pricing and Toll Projects within the Portland Metro Region

December 5, 2023

The jurisdictions named here support a functional regional transportation system that prioritizes safety, equity, a vibrant economy, healthy and active communities, climate action, disaster resilience, and the reliable movement of people and goods.

We acknowledge that additional transportation funding is needed to address maintenance and capital projects on the interstate system. We recognize ODOT has been directed to pursue pricing in some form, but also that toll collections have been paused until 2026 in order to better address local concerns. As ODOT continues to advance tolling and explore other funding strategies, the jurisdictions listed here will advocate for the following values to be reflected in any proposed policy or project.

**These values are not an endorsement of any proposal to implement tolling or congestion pricing.**

## **To rebuild trust with local communities, ODOT must...**

- Be influenced by local voices and jurisdictions ahead of implementation
- Deliver clear benefits to the drivers, communities, and businesses affected by toll corridors
- Prioritize robust and inclusive community engagement
- Incorporate and track commitments made with local and regional partners through transparent and consistent communication

## **To ensure the transportation system works for Oregonians, the OTC and the State Legislature should direct ODOT to...**

- Extend the existing revenue sharing models with local jurisdictions to apply to toll revenues
- Prioritize the completion of the bottleneck projects identified in HB 2017 (2017) and HB 3055 (2021)
- Explore alternative funding mechanisms beyond pricing to address transportation funding needs
- Provide adequate public transit infrastructure within proposed toll corridors

## **To ensure the efficient and equitable movement of people and goods, tolling or congestion pricing programs should...**

- Decrease diversion into local communities
- Increase safety on and off the interstate system
- Ensure that all tolling or congestion programs are designed with regional implementation and collaboration in mind to avoid disproportionate economic impacts or unfair burdens on people and communities
- Support a regionally balanced transportation system that provides reliable travel times for commuters and employers on and off the tolled corridor
- Establish viable travel alternatives to accommodate mode shifts, including bicycle and pedestrian networks and accessible transit programs in areas with inadequate or no service
- Provide considerations for local trips with few or no alternatives
- Improve transportation system resiliency to natural disasters, such as earthquakes and wildfires
- Improve regional air quality and reduce vehicle pollution, both on and off the interstate system
- Establish a long-term oversight and accountability committee to provide transparency
- Consider recommendations from the Low-income Toll Report and the Equity Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC)
- Address the land use implications inherent with how tolling will affect local communities



CITY OF MILWAUKIE