

**To: [Oregon Legislature's Joint Committee On Transportation - Special Subcommittee On Transportation Planning](#)**

**From: Frank Stevens/430 SE 16<sup>th</sup> Circle/Troutdale Oregon 97060**

Oregon City, West Linn, and Gladstone Area Tolling Project Public Hearing

- Date: Saturday, January 6 2024
- Time: 1 - 3 PM
- Location: Gladstone High School Auditorium, 18800 Portland Ave., Gladstone, OR 97027

Dear JTSSP Committee,

Thank you for providing the opportunity for supporting these crucial public meetings to discuss the interstate tolling proposals on I-5 and I-205. I appreciate your commitment to sustainable transportation solutions, equitable mobility, and congestion pricing.

After reading The Street Trust's #OurStreets Substack, "[Do Oregonians Support Tolling?](#)" and the ODOT Equitable Mobility Advisory council reports, it was disturbing to find how the media and misinformed public leadership has often distorted the use of tolling as a tool for shifting vehicle trips to less congested times and routes toward more space efficient and less polluting models.

Some of the central themes to dispute tolling do not highlight key priorities presented by the public survey responses on how tolling can be used as part of a larger policy framing to better our state in the future. Examples of priorities include:

**Priority 1: Traffic Demand Management**

- Tolling as a tool for effective management of traffic demand and to reduce congestion on our highways
- How it helps to avoid induced demand, where reduced congestion leads to more driving, undermining our project goals
- How tolling it is **not** part of a false binary between managing demand on the interstates and ensuring safe local streets in communities – both are possible and even complementary!

**Priority 2: Revenue Allocation**

- Toll revenues can be allocated to enhance public transit and active transportation options not for expanding more highways and creating induced demand.
- This toll revenue provides options for improving infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and alternative transportation methods to driving alone
- The new tolling dollars can be reinvested on safe streets that prevent crashes, not expanding highways and increasing VMT
- Tolling can be used as a way of expanding bus and light rail services and providing transit options to underserved areas.

Most importantly I would challenge the assumption that constitutional limits on gas tax proceeds apply to toll proceeds, we need to change how we allocate our funds toward our future goals rather than past detrimental transportation practices. ODOT needs to provide equitable transportation funding opportunities for people not just vehicles.

**Priority 3: Equity and Accountability**

I would strongly support the recommendations of ODOT's Equitable Mobility Advisory Committee (EMAC) for an equitable toll program, particularly the 400% MFI threshold for the low-income toll program. Also, I would stress the need to advocate for clear policies, oversight, and accountability metrics to prevent tolls from disproportionately impacting communities of color or low-income communities. As a resident who commutes from East Multnomah County to Inner Portland, I can support the need to invest toll revenue in programs addressing transportation access and affordability disparities, including job access and anti-displacement efforts.

**Priority 4: Community Impact Mitigation**

I agree with the need to support targeted outreach to low-income and vulnerable populations. While insisting that ODOT develop a revenue sharing agreement with local jurisdictions to mitigate the impacts of tolling on local communities and continue to monitor and evaluate to minimize negative impacts and maximize benefits for all community members.

**Priority 5: Transparency and Communication**

I would encourage ongoing communication and collaboration between ODOT and the local community for tolling projects to include the importance of ODOT transparency, including showing calculations and data used for decision-making. Additionally, I would highlight the need to clarify decision-making authority, particularly whether the Oregon Transportation Commission has the final say on how the toll programs work is a step in the right direction.

We currently have national examples of the use of best available toll data and technology to accurately price the toll system and collect revenue can be benchmarked from other states in the country.

These priorities only reiterate my commitment to support effective transportation policies and congestion pricing that prioritizes sustainable, equitable, and multimodal solutions **not** only increased highway development as presented by ODOT. It is imperative ODOT address the current trust deficits with local partners and the public through revenue-sharing agreements and transparent communication. Tolling is not the only tool in our tool chest for transportation but if used correctly as a focus on advancing demand management and multimodal infrastructure and services it can be beneficial.

**Doing nothing**, however, does not further our community goals of decreasing vehicle miles traveled by single operated vehicles or decrease greenhouse emissions or increase transportation safety and public health. Doing nothing does not benefit anyone except the current status quo. As a 32-year resident of the Portland metro area, I have driven, biked, walked and utilized all the available transportation systems. It is time we stopped doing nothing, which only perpetuates a failing system, and invested in doing something for our future generations.

Respectfully,  
Frank Stevens

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